

JUST PUBLISHED,

Dedicated by Permission to Her Royal Highness the Duchess of Kent,
IN ONE SMALL VOLUME, BOUND IN SILK, WITH COLOURED PLATES
THIRD EDITION, REVISED,

BY

THE EDITOR OF "THE FORGET ME NOT

THE LANGUAGE OF FLOWERS.

—
"By all those token flowers that tell
What words can never speak so well."

BYRON.

WHEN Nature laughs out in all the triumph of Spring, it may be said, without a metaphor, that in her thousand varieties of flowers, we see the sweetest of her smiles; that through them, we comprehend the exultation of her joys; and that, by them, she wafts her songs of thanksgiving to the Heaven above her, which repays her tribute of gratitude with looks of love. Yes, flowers have their language. Theirs is an oratory that speaks in perfumed silence, and there is tenderness, and passion, and even the light-heartedness of mirth, in the variegated beauty of their vocabulary. To the poetical mind, they are not mute to each other, to the pious, they are not mute to their Creator; and ours shall be the office, in this little volume, to translate their pleasing language, and to show that no spoken word can approach to the delicacy of sentiment to be inferred from a flower seasonably offered; that the softest impressions may be thus conveyed without offence, and even the profound grief alleviated, at a moment when the most tuneful voice would grate harshly on the ear, and when the stricken soul can be soothed only by unbroken silence.

In treating of so gay a subject we will not make a parade of our learning, to tell our fair readers what fine things Pliny has said upon it; or, in the spirit of posing, write a crabbed treatise upon the

Egyptian hieroglyphics. We will even spare them a dissertation upon the floral Alphabet of the effeminate Chinese; they had, and have, their flowers and their feelings, their emblems and their ecstasies.—Let them enjoy them.—We shall do no more than rove through the European Garden, to cull its beauties, to arrange them into odoriferous significance, and to teach our refined and purifying science to those fair beings, the symbols of whose mortal beauty are but inadequately found in the most glorious flowers, and whose mental charms cannot be duly typified till we shall have reached those abodes where reigns everlasting spring, and where decay is unknown.

But little study will be requisite for the science which we teach. Nature has been before us. We must, however, premise two or three rules. When a flower is presented in its natural position, the sentiment is to be understood affirmatively, when reversed, negatively. For instance, a rose-bud, with its leaves and thorns, indicates *fear* with *hope*, but, if reversed, it must be construed as saying, “you may neither *fear* nor *hope*.” Again, divest the same rose-bud of its thorns, and it permits the most sanguine hope, deprive it of its petals, and retain the thorns, and the worst fears may be entertained. The expression of every flower may be thus varied by varying its state or position. The marygold is emblematical of pain, place it on the head and it signifies trouble of mind; on the heart, the pangs of love; on the bosom, the disgusts of *ennui*. The pronoun *I* is expressed by inclining the symbol to the right, and the pronoun *thou*, by inclining it to the left.

These are a few of the rudiments of our significant language. We call upon Friendship and Love to unite their discoveries with ours; for it is in the power only of these sweetest sentiments of our nature to bring to perfection what they have so beautifully invented, the mystical, yet pleasing, links of intelligence, that bind soul to soul, in the tender and quiet harmony of the one, or in the more impassioned felicity of the other.—*Preface to the Language of Flowers.*

PUBLISHED BY SAUNDERS AND OTLEY,

CONDUIT STREET, HANOVER SQUARE.

THH

POETRY OF LIFE

BY

SARAH STICKNEY,

AUTHOR OF "PICTURES OF PRIVATE LIFE"

"Poetry has been to me its own exceeding 'great reward.' It has soothed my afflictions, it has multiplied and refined my enjoyments; it has endeared solitude, and it has given me the habit of wishing to discover the good and the beautiful, in all that meets and surrounds me."—COLFRIDGE

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

LONDON

SAUNDERS AND OTLEY, CONDUIT STREET

1835.

P R E F A C E.



IN offering to the attention of the public, two volumes on the Poetry of Life, some apology seems necessary for prefixing to my book a title of such indefinite signification. If poetry be understood to mean mere versification, and life mere vitality, it would be difficult indeed to establish their connection with each other. The design of the present work is to treat of poetic feeling, rather than poetry; and this feeling I have endeavoured to describe, as the great connecting link between our intellects and our affections; while the customs of society, as well as the licence of modern lite-

rature, afford me sufficient authority for the use of the word life in its widely extended sense, as comprehending all the functions, attributes, and capabilities peculiar to sentient beings.

Whatever may be the opinion of the public respecting the manner in which my task has been executed, the enjoyment it has afforded to the writer, in being the means of a renewed acquaintance with the principles of intellectual happiness, is already in possession ; and I have only to wish that the reader may be induced to seek the same enjoyment, in a more spiritual intercourse with nature, and a more profound admiration of the beauty and harmony of the creation.

CONTENTS OF VOL. I.



	PAGE
CHARACTERISTICS OF POETRY	1
WHY CERTAIN OBJECTS ARE, OR ARE NOT, POETICAL	20
INDIVIDUAL ASSOCIATIONS	41
GENERAL ASSOCIATIONS	58
THE POETRY OF FLOWERS	76
THE POETRY OF TREES	88
THE POETRY OF ANIMALS	107
THE POETRY OF EVENING	112
THE POETRY OF THE MOON	156
THE POETRY OF RURAL LIFE	182
THE POETRY OF PAINTING	213
THE POETRY OF SOUND	256
THE POETRY OF LANGUAGE	285

POETRY OF LIFE.



CHARACTERISTICS OF POETRY.

THAT the quality of modern Poetry is a subject of general complaint with those who would purchase—that the price affixed to it by the judgment of the public is equally complained of by those who would sell—in short, that Poetry is at present “a drug in the market,” is a phrase too hackneyed, too vulgar, and too frequently assented to, to need repetition here; except as an established fact, the nature, cause, and consequence of which, I propose endeavouring to point out in the following pages.

Wherever a taste for Poetry exists, there will be a desire to read as well as to write; to receive as well as to impart that enjoyment

which poetic feeling affords. In other cases of marketable produce, the supply is found to keep pace with the demand, except when physical causes operate against it. If the poets of the present day have "written themselves out," as the common and unmeaning expression is, what, with a rapidly-increasing population, should hinder the springing up of fresh poets to delight the world? The fact is, that most of the living poets have betaken themselves to Prose as a more lucrative employment, thus proving, that the taste for Poetry is lamentably decreasing in the public mind; and while on one hand, genius is weeping over her harvest "whitening in the sun," without hope of profit to repay the toil of gathering in the golden store; on the other, criticism is in arms against less sordid adventurers, and calls in no measured terms upon the mighty minstrels of past ages to avenge Parnassus of her wrongs.

Three different motives operate in stimulating men to write Poetry: the love of fame, the want of money, and an internal restlessness of feeling, which is too indiscriminately called genius. The first of these ceases with the second, for without the means of circulation there can be no hope of fame. The third

alone operates in the present day, and small indeed is the recompense bestowed in these ungrateful times upon the poets who write because they cannot help it. Yet after all, is not this the true and legitimate method by which the genuine coin of genius is moulded ? The love of fame is a high and soul-stirring principle, but still it is degraded with the stigma of selfish aggrandisement, and who does not feel that a shade is cast upon those expressions of noble sentiment, which bear the impress of having been prepared and set forth solely for public approbation. The want of money is indeed a potent stimulus. How potent let the midnight labours of the starving poet testify. The want of money may, it is true, urge onward towards the same goal as the love of fame, but the one operates as it were from behind, by the painful application of a goad ; while the other attracts, and fascinates by the brightness of some object before, which too often proves to be an ignis fatuus in the distance. But there is within the human mind an active and powerful principle, that awakens the dormant faculties, lights up the brain, and launches forth imagination to gather up from the wide realm of nature the very essence of what every human

bosom pines for, when it aspires to a higher state of existence, and feels the insufficiency of this. It is this heaven-born and ethereal principle, not maptly personified as the Spirit of Poesy, that weaves a garland of the flowers which imagination has culled; and from the fervency of its own passion, to impart as well as to receive enjoyment, casts this garland at the feet of the sordid and busy multitude, who pause, not to admire, but trample its vivid beauty in the dust. It is this principle that will not let the intellectual faculties remain inactive, but is for ever working in the laboratory of the brain, combining, sublimating, and purifying. It is this principle, when under the government of right reason, which is properly called genius. It is this principle, when perverted from its high purpose, and made the minister of base passions, which produces the most splendid and most melancholy ruin. It is this principle, when devoted to the cause of holiness, which scatters over the path of desolation flowers of unfading loveliness; pours floods of light upon our distant prospects of the celestial city; and inspires the harps of heaven-taught minstrels with undying melody.

This principle, in less figurative phraseology, I would describe as the Poetry of Life; because it pervades all things either seen, felt, or understood, where the associations are sublime, beautiful, tender, or refined. In short, where the ideas which naturally connect themselves with our contemplation of such subjects, are most exclusively intellectual, and separate from sense.

That there is much Poetry in real life, with all its sorrows, and pains, and sordid anxieties, and that "all is not vanity and vexation of spirit under the sun," to him who can honestly and innocently enjoy the commonest blessings of Providence," has been already proved by one in whose steps I feel that I am unworthy to walk; but since, in his admirable lectures on Poetry, he has treated the subject as a science, rather than a principle; I am emboldened to take up the theme, to which he, above all men (more especially above all women) would have done justice, had he chosen to launch forth into more abstruse and speculative notions respecting the nature and influence of poetic feeling.

That the poetry of the present times is an unsaleable article needs then no farther proof

than the observation and experience of every day, and since it is as difficult to believe that the human mind with all the advantages afforded by the most enlightened state of civilization should have become more base and degenerate, as that the treasury of nature should be exhausted, it becomes a subject of curious and interesting investigation to search out the cause, and ascertain whether it may not be in some measure attributable to our present system of education being one of words rather than of ideas, of the head rather than the heart, of calculation rather than moral feeling.

While the full and free tide of knowledge is daily pouring from the press, while books and book-makers appear before us in every possible situation, and under all imaginable circumstances, so that to have written a volume, is now less a distinction than to have read one through; while cheap and popular publications fraught with all manner of interesting details are accessible to the poorest classes of the community, it is impossible to believe that there is not sufficient talent concentrated or afloat to constitute a poet. And while the blue sky bends over all—while that sky is studded with the same bright host of stars, amongst

which the philosopher is perpetually discovering fresh worlds of glory; while the seasons with their infinite variety still continue to bring forth, to vivify, and to perfect the produce of the earth; while the woods are vocal with melody, and the air is peopled with myriads of ephemeral beings whose busy wings are dipped in gold, or bathed in azure, or light and fragile as the gossamer, yet ever bearing them on through a region of delight, from the snowy bosom of the lily, to the scented atmosphere of the rose; while the mountain stream rushes down from the hills, or the rivers roll onward to the sea; and above all, while there exists in the heart of man a deep sense of these enjoyments—a mirror in which beauty is reflected—an echo to the voice of music; while he is capable of feeling admiration for that which is noble or sublime, tenderness for the weak, sympathy for the suffering, and affection for all things lovely, it is impossible to believe that true poetry should cease to please, or fail to awaken a response in the human heart. And that man is capable of all this, and more, and more capable in proportion as he cultivates and cherishes the noblest faculties of his nature,

we have to thank the Giver of all our enjoyments, the Creator of all our capabilities.

How are these faculties now cultivated? "Knowledge is power." But neither is knowledge all that we live for, nor power all that we enjoy. There are deep mysteries in the book of nature which all can feel, but none will ever understand until the veil of mortality shall be withdrawn. There are stirrings in the soul of man which constitute the very essence of his being, and which power can neither satisfy nor subdue. Yet this mystery reveals more truly than the clearest proofs, or mightiest deductions of science, that a master hand has been for ages, and is still at work, above, beneath, and around us; and this moving principle is for ever reminding us that in our nature we inherit the germs of a future existence over which time has no influence, and the grave no victory.

Far be it from every liberal mind to maintain the superiority of *feeling* over the other faculties of our nature. In forming a correct opinion on any subject of taste, it is necessary to examine, compare, and criticise, with an eye familiarized to what is most admirable, and a judgment controlled by a strict adherence to the

rules of art. No argument is required to prove that were feeling allowed to be the sole impulse of our actions, we should become as culpable in morals, as absurd in our pursuits; or that the man gifted with the quickest perceptions and keenest sensibility, yet untutored in scientific rules, would expose himself to well-merited ridicule, should he attempt in a poem or a picture, to delineate his own conceptions of grandeur or beauty. Even were he able to throw into his performance the force of the most daring genius, or the most inextinguishable enthusiasm, it would prove in the end, no better than a mockery of art, and remain a memorial of his own madness and folly. Nor on the other hand, will he who is by nature destitute of sensibility, or he who has spent the spring-time of existence in the crowded city, and expended all the fresh energies of his mind in the bustle and hurry of sordid occupations, having laid up no secret store of associations with what is noble, lovely or refined in nature, be able to produce a poem or a picture that will please the imagination or warm the heart, even though in his laboured performance, the critic should find no fault

with the harmony of his numbers, the choice of his colouring, or the subjects of both.

The qualifications of a true poet are, in the first place, natural capacity, and favourable opportunity for receiving impressions ; and in the second, ability to arrange, compare, and select from these impressions. Without the former, he must be deficient in materials for his work ; without the latter, he must want the power to make a rational use of any materials whatever. It is the former alone that we can suppose to be wanting in the present day ; for though the human mind unquestionably retains the same capabilities it possessed in the last century, it is possible that opportunities for imbibing strong impressions from external nature may not now be afforded with the same facility ; and that in the present rapid march of intellect, the muse of poesy may be so hurried out of breath, as not to find time to chant her charmed lays.

The same causes which tend to destroy that taste, which would ensure to the works of our poets a welcome reception in refined and intellectual circles of society, necessarily operate against the production of poetry ; and

thus, while we refuse to feast our minds with ideas of the sublime and beautiful, we must naturally lose the higher sensibilities and finer perceptions of our nature. To awaken these sensibilities, and quicken these perceptions, by pointing out what it is which constitutes the poetry of life, will be the task of the writer through the following pages; to prove, that in order to see, think, or write poetically, it is necessary that we should at some period of our lives, have had time and opportunity to receive deep and lasting impressions; and that out of these impressions is woven the interminable chain of association which connects our perceptions of things present, with our ideas or conceptions of those which are remote.

In commencing a serious and arduous task, it would ill become an accountable agent to neglect the important inquiry of what may be the moral good of such an undertaking; and here the question will naturally occur to many, whether poetry is of any real value in promoting the happiness of man. England is a commercial country, and we know that poetry has little to do with increasing the facilities of commerce, as little as with the better regulation of the poor laws, or the settlement of any

of those leading questions which at present agitate the political world. But poetry has a world of its own—a world in which, if sordid calculations have no place, the noble, the immortal part of our nature is cherished, invigorated and refined.

In touching upon this inspiring theme, it is impossible not to feel the inadequacy of moderate powers when compared with those of perhaps the most luminous writer of the present day, whose review of Milton's works contains in direct relation to this subject, the following eloquent and inimitable appeal to the highest feelings of human nature. I quote at great length, because I would not break the charm of the whole passage by garbled extracts; and I risk the quotation at the peril of having the rest of my book contrasted with these pages, like a chaplet of mock gems, in which is one true diamond.

“Milton's fame rests chiefly on his poetry, and to this we naturally give our first attention. By those who are apt to speak of poetry as light reading, Milton's eminence in this sphere may be considered as only giving him a high rank among the contributors to public amusement. Not so thought Milton. Of all God's gifts of

intellect, he esteemed poetical genius the most transcendent. He esteemed it in himself as a kind of inspiration, and wrote his great works with something of the conscious dignity of a prophet. We agree with Milton in his estimate of poetry. It seems to us the divinest of all arts ; for it is the breathing or expression of that principle or sentiment, which is deepest and sublimest in human nature ; we mean of that thirst or aspiration, to which no mind is wholly a stranger, for something purer and lovelier, something more powerful, lofty, and thrilling than ordinary and real life affords. No doctrine is more common among Christians than that of man's immortality, but it is not so generally understood, that the germs or principles of his whole future being are *now* wrapped up in his soul, as the rudiments of the future plant in the seed. As a necessary result of this constitution, the soul, possessed and moved by these mighty, though infant energies, is perpetually stretching beyond what is present and visible, struggling against the bounds of its earthly prison-house, and seeking relief and joy in imaginings of unseen and ideal being. This view of our nature, which has never been fully developed, and which

goes farther towards explaining the contradictions of human life than all others, carries us to the very foundation and sources of poetry. He, who cannot interpret by his own consciousness what we have now said, wants the true key to works of genius. He has not penetrated those sacred recesses of the soul, where poetry is born and nourished, and inhales immortal vigour, and wings herself for her heavenward flight. In an intellectual nature, framed for progress, and for higher modes of being, there must be creative energies, powers of original, and ever-growing thought; and poetry is the form in which these energies are chiefly manifested. It is the glorious prerogative of this art, that it makes 'all things new' for the gratification of a divine instinct. It indeed finds its elements in what it actually sees and experiences, in the worlds of matter and mind, but it combines and blends these into new forms, and according to new affinities; breaks down, if we may so say, the distinctions and bounds of nature; imparts to material objects life, and sentiment, and emotion, and invests the mind with the powers and splendours of the outward creation; describes the surrounding universe in the colours which

the passions throw over it, and depicts the mind in those modes of repose or agitation, of tenderness or sublime emotion, which manifest its thirst for a more powerful and joyful existence. To a man of a literal and prosaic character, the mind may seem lawless in these workings ; but it observes higher laws than it transgresses, the laws of the immortal intellect ; it is trying and developing its best faculties ; and in the objects which it describes, or in the emotions which it awakens, anticipates those states of progressive power, splendour, beauty, and happiness, for which it was created.

“We accordingly believe that poetry, so far from injuring society, is one of the great instruments of its refinement and exaltation. It lifts the mind above ordinary life ; gives it a respite from depressing cares, and awakens the consciousness of its affinity with what is pure and noble. In its legitimate and highest efforts, it has the same tendency and aim with Christianity ; that is, to spiritualize our nature. True, poetry has been made the instrument of vice, the pander of bad passions ; but when genius thus stoops, it dims its fires, and parts with much of its power ; and even when poetry is enslaved to licentiousness or misanthropy,

she cannot wholly forget her true vocation. Strains of pure feeling, touches of tenderness, images of innocent happiness, sympathies with suffering virtue, bursts of scorn or indignation at the hollowness of the world, passages true to our moral nature, often escape in an immoral work, and show us how hard it is for a gifted spirit to divorce itself wholly from what is good. Poetry has a natural alliance with our best affections. It delights in the beauty and sublimity of the outward creation and of the soul. It indeed portrays with terrible energy the excesses of the passions; but they are passions which show a mighty nature, which are full of power, which command awe, and excite a deep, though shuddering sympathy. Its great tendency and purpose is, to carry the mind beyond and above the beaten, dusty, weary walks of ordinary life; to lift it into a purer element; and to breathe into it more profound and generous emotion. It reveals to us the loveliness of nature, brings back the freshness of youthful feeling, revives the relish of simple pleasures, keeps unquenched the enthusiasm which warmed the spring-time of our being, refines youthful love, strengthens our interest in human nature by

vivid delineations of its tenderest and loftiest feelings, knits us by new ties with universal being, and through the brightness of its prophetic visions, helps faith to lay hold on the future life.

“We are aware that it is objected to poetry, that it gives wrong views, and excites false expectations of life; peoples the mind with shadows and illusions, and builds up imagination on the ruins of wisdom. That there is a wisdom against which poetry wars, the wisdom of the senses, which makes physical comfort and gratification the supreme good, and wealth the chief interest of life, we do not deny; nor do we deem it the least service which poetry renders to mankind, that it redeems them from the thralldom of this earth-born prudence. But, passing over this topic, we would observe, that the complaint against poetry as abounding in illusion and deception, is in the main, groundless. In many poems, there is more truth than in many histories and philosophic theories. The fictions of genius are often the vehicles of the sublimest verities, and its flashes often open new regions of thought, and throw new light on the mysteries of our being. In poetry, the letter is false-

hood, but the spirit is often profoundest wisdom. And if truth thus dwells in the holdest fictions of the poet, much more may it be expected in his delineations of life; for the present life, which is the first stage of the immortal mind, abounds in the materials of poetry; and it is the high office of the bard to detect this divine element among the grosser labours and pleasures of our earthly being. The present life is not wholly prosaic, precise, tame, and finite. To the gifted eye, it abounds in the poetic. The affections which spread beyond ourselves, and stretch far into futurity; the workings of mighty passions, which seem to arm the soul with almost super-human energy; the innocent and irrepressible joy of infancy; the bloom, and buoyancy, and dazzling hopes of youth; the throbbings of the heart, when it first wakes to love, and dreams of a happiness too vast for earth; woman, with her beauty, and grace, and gentleness, and fulness of feeling, and depth of affection, and her blushes of purity, and the tones and looks which only a mother's heart can inspire;—these are all poetical. It is not true that the poet paints a life which does not exist; he only extracts and concentrates, as it were, life's

ethereal essence; arrests and condenses its volatile fragrance, brings together its scattered beauties, and prolongs its more refined but evanescent joys; and in this he does well; for it is good to feel that life is not wholly usurped by cares for subsistence, and physical gratifications, but admits, in measures which may be indefinitely enlarged, sentiments and delights worthy of a higher being. This power of poetry to refine our views of life and happiness, is more and more needed as society advances. It is needed to withstand the encroachments of heartless and artificial manners, which make civilization so tame and uninteresting. It is needed to counteract the tendency of physical science, which being now sought, not as formerly for intellectual gratification, but for multiplying bodily comforts, requires a new development of imagination, taste, and poetry, to preserve men from sinking into an earthly, material, epicurean life."

WHY CERTAIN OBJECTS ARE, OR ARE
NOT, POETICAL.

THAT a book, a picture, and sometimes a very worthy man, are without Poetry, is a fact almost as deeply felt, and as well understood, as the memorable anathema of Shakspeare against the man who had not music in his soul. In many books this is no defect, in all pictures it is a striking and important one; while in men it can only be a defect proportioned to the high standing they may choose to take in the scale of intellect or feeling. The spirit of Poetry has little to do with the labours of the artizan, nor would our tables be more plentifully supplied, were they furnished under the direction of the muses. But who would feel even the slightest gratification in reading Wordsworth's *Excursion*, with a com-

panion, who could not feel poetically? or who would choose to explore the wild and magnificent beauties of mountain scenery, with one whose ideas were bounded by the limits of the Bank of England?

When our nature is elevated above the mere objects of sense, there is a want created in us of something, which the business of the world, nay, even science itself, is unable to supply; for not only is the bustling man of business an unwelcome associate in the wilderness of untrodden beauty, but even he becomes wearisome at last, who applies his noisy hammer to every projection of rock, and peeps into every crevice, and up the side of every precipice, with eyes, thoughts, and memory for nothing but strata; precisely as it is presented to his vision then and there, without once giving himself time to draw deductions from what he discovers, to make an extended survey of the distant scenery, or to drink in the enjoyment of the magnificent whole.

In the general contemplation of external nature, we feel the influence of Poetry, though chiefly and almost exclusively in objects which are in themselves or their associations beautiful or sublime. Thus we are pleased with a

widely-extended view, even over a level country, purely because the sublime idea of space is connected with it ; but let this expanse be travelled over, closely inspected, and regarded in its minutia, and it becomes indescribably wearisome and monotonous. The fact is, the idea of space is lost, while the attention is arrested and absorbed by immediate and minor circumstances. The mind is incapable of feeling two opposite sensations at the same time, and all impressions made upon the senses being so much more quick and sudden than those made through them upon the imagination, they have the power to attract and carry away the attention in the most peremptory and vexatious manner. All subjects intended to inspire admiration or reverence, must therefore be treated with the most scrupulous regard to refinement. It is so easy for the vulgar touch to

“ Turn what was once romantic to burlesque.”

A tone of ridicule may at once dispel the charm of tenderness, and a senseless parody may for awhile destroy the sublimity of a splendid poem.

Among the works of art, the influence of poetic feeling is most perceptible in painting

and sculpture. A picture sometimes pleases from a secret charm which cannot well be defined, and which arises not so much from the proper adjustment of colour and outline according to the rules of art, as from the sudden, mysterious, and combined emotions which the sight of it awakens in the soul. But let any striking departure from these rules arrest the attention, let the eye be offended by the colouring, and the taste shocked by the grouping or perspective—the illusion is destroyed, and the poet awakes from his dream. It is precisely the same with sculpture, that most sublime production of the hand of man, which by its cold, still, marble beauty, unawakened by the shocks of time, unmoved by the revolutions of the world, has power to charm the wandering thoughts, and inspire sensations of deep reverence and awe. But let us suppose the enthusiast returning to gaze upon the statue, which has been through years of wandering little less than an idol to his enraptured fancy, and that hands profane (for such things are) have presumed to colour the pupils of the upturned eyes—let any other sensation whatever, directly at variance with what the figure itself is calculated to inspire, be made to

strike the attention of the beholder, and he is plunged at once down that fatal and irrevocable step, which leads from the sublime to the ridiculous.

The human face, the most familiar object to our eyes since they first opened upon the world, may be, and often is, highly poetical. Who has not seen amidst the multitude some countenance to which he turns, and turns again, with strange wonder and delight, assigning to it an appropriate character and place in scenes even the most remote from the present, and following up, in idea, the different trains of thought by which its expression is varied, and its intelligence communicated? Yet this face may not be in itself, or strictly speaking, beautiful; but, like the painting or the statue, it has the power to awaken the most pleasing associations. With such power there can be combined no mixture of the grotesque or vulgar; for though poetry may be ridiculous, it is impossible for the ridiculous to be poetical.

There is Poetry in an infant's sleep. How much, let abler words than mine describe.

"So motionless in its slumbers, that in watching it we tremble, and become impatient

for some stir or sound, that may assure us of its life; yet is the fancy of the little sleeper busy, and every artery and every pulse of its frame engaged in the work and growth of secretion, though his breath would not stir the smallest insect that sported on his lips—though his pulse would not lift the flower leaf of which he dreamed from his bosom :—yet following this emblem of tranquillity into after life, we see him exposed to every climate—contending with every obstacle—agitated by every passion; and under these various circumstances, how different is the power and the degree of the heart's action, which has not only to beat, but to beat time through every moment of a long and troubled life.”*

We feel in reading this passage, even if we have never felt before, that there is poetry in an infant's sleep. Its waking moments are less poetical, because of the many little cares and vexations they force upon us; and no power on earth could convince us that there was poetry in an infant's cry. Yet is it neither softness nor sweetness which always constitutes the poetry of sound; for what can be more discordant in itself than the caw of the

* Dr. James Willson.

rook, the scream of the sea-gull, or the bleating of the lamb?

There is poetry in the low-roofed cottage standing on the skirts of the wood, beneath the overshadowing oak, around which the children of many generations have gambolled, while the wreathing smoke coils up amongst the dark green foliage, and the grey thatch is contrasted with golden moss and glittering ivy. We stand and gaze, delighted with this picture of rural peace and privileged seclusion. We long to shake off the shackles of artificial society, the wearying cares of life, the imperative control of fashion, or the toil and traffic of the busy world, and to dwell for the remainder of our days in a quiet spot like this, where affection, that is too often lost in the game of life, might unfold her store of fire-side comforts, and where we and ours might constitute one unbroken chain of social fellowship, under the shelter of security and peace. But let us enter this privileged abode. Our ears are first saluted by the sharp voice of the matron, calling in her tattered rebels from the common. They are dragged in by violence, and a scene of wrath and contention ensues. The fragments of the last meal are scattered on the

floor. That beautifully curling smoke, before it found a way to escape so gracefully, has made many a circuit round the dark and crumbling walls of the apartment; and smoke within the house is any thing but poetical, whatever it may be without. Need I say the charm is broken? Even after having made good our retreat, if we turn and look again, the low-roofed cottage does not appear the same as when we first beheld it. The associations are changed—the charm is indeed broken. May not this be the reason why fine ladies and gentlemen talk so much more about the poetry of a cottage, than those who know no other home comforts than a cottage affords? Even poverty itself may be poetical to those who merely regard it from a distance, or as a picture; but the vision is dispelled for ever by the first gripe of that iron hand, that spares neither the young, the helpless, nor the old.

There is poetry in the mouldering pile, upon which the alternate suns and storms of a thousand years have smiled and spent their fury—the old grey ruin hung over with festoons of ivy, while around its broken turrets a garland of wild plants is growing, from seeds

which the wandering winds have scattered. We behold the imperishable materials of the natural world collected together, shaped out and formed by the art of man into that beautiful and majestic edifice: but where are the ready hands that laboured in that work of time and patience? The busy feet that trod those stately courts—the laughter that echoed through those halls—the sighs that were breathed in those secret cells—the many generations that came and went without leaving a record or a name—where are they? Scarcely can there be found an imagination so dull, but the contemplation of a ruin will awaken it to some dim and dreamy associations with past ages—scarcely a heart so callous, but it will feel, in connection with such a scene, some touch of that melancholy which inspired the memorable exclamation, “All is vanity and vexation of spirit!”

But let the ingenuity of man erect a modern ruin, or mock monastery, arch for arch, and pillar for pillar—nay, let him, if possible, plant weed for weed. The fancy will not be cheated into illusion—this mushroom toy of yesterday will remain a mockery still.

Amongst the labours of man’s ingenuity and

skill, there are few things more poetical than the aspect of a ship at sea, whether she goes forth with swelling sails before the wind, or lies becalmed upon a quiet shore. Even the simplest or rudest vessels floating on the surface of the water—from the lazy barge that glides along the smooth canal, to the light gondola that sports among the glowing waters of more classic shores—from the simple craft that ply upon our own rivers, to the rude canoe of the savage darting among reefs of coral; afford choice subjects for the painter's pencil, and the poet's song. Who has not watched with intense interest a little speck upon the ocean, that neared, and neared, until human forms at length were visible, and then the splash of the oar was heard at regular intervals, and at last, on the crest of a foaming wave, the boat seemed to bound triumphant on the shore, where a little band of the long-tried and the faithful, amongst whom woman is never found wanting, welcome the mariners home, safe from the storms and the dangers of the sea? Who has not stood upon the beach, a silent, but deeply-interested spectator, while a crew of hardy and weather-beaten sailors launched forth their little bark amongst

the roaring breakers, battling their way through foam and surge, now dipping into the dark hollows between every swell, and then rising unharmed upon the snowy crest of the raging billows. A few moments more of determined struggle, and the difficulty is overcome; and now they have hoisted sail and are gone bounding over the dark blue waters, perhaps never to return. Who has not marked, while gazing on the surface of the silent lake when the moon was shining, that long line of trembling light that looks like a pathway to a better world, suddenly broken by the intervention of some object that proves to be a boat, in which human forms are discernible, though distant yet marked out with a momentary distinctness, which affords imagination a fund of associations, connecting those unknown objects so quickly seen, and then lost for ever, with vague speculations about what they are or have been, from whence they have so suddenly emerged, to what unseen point of illimitable space they may be destined, and what may be the darkness, or the radiance of their future course. Or who has ever witnessed the departure of a gallant vessel under favouring skies, bound on a distant and uncertain

voyage, her sails all trim, her rigging tight, her deck well manned, her cargo secure as human skill and foresight can make it, while she stoops one moment with unabated majesty, to rise more proudly the next, bursting through the ruffled waters, and dashing from her sides the feathery foam; without thinking of a proud and reckless spirit rushing forth on its adventurous career, unconscious of the rocks and shoals, the rude gales and the raging tempests, that await its onward course. Or who, without a thrill of something more than earthly feeling, can gaze over the unruffled surface of the sea when the winds are sleeping, and the waves at rest, except on the near verge of the blue expanse, where a gentle murmur, with regular ebb and flow of soothing and monotonous sound marks the intervals at which a line of sleepy waves rise, and fall, and follow each other, without pause or intermission, far up along the sparkling shore, and then recede into the depths of the smooth and shining waters. The sun is high in the heavens—the air is clear and buoyant—now and then a white cloud sails along the field of azure, its misty form marked out in momentary darkness on the sea below, like the passing shadow of an angel's

wings ; while far, far in the distance, and gliding on towards the horizon, are those wandering messengers of the deep that bear tidings from shore to shore, their swelling sails now glancing white in the sunbeams, now darkened by the passing cloud. Musing on such a scene, we forget our own identity—our own earthly, bodily existence ; we live in the world of spirits, and are lost in exquisite imaginings, in memories and hopes that belong not to the things of clay ; everything we behold is personified and gifted with intelligence ; the rugged cliffs possess a terrible majesty, and seem to threaten while they frown upon the slumbering shore ; the deep and boundless sea represented at all times as acting or suffering by its own will or power, is now more than ever endued with the thoughts and passions of spiritual existence, and seems to speak to us in its own solemn and most intelligible language of terror in motion, and sublimity in repose : but more than all, the ships that go forth upon its bosom convey to our fancy the idea of being influenced by an instinct of their own ; so well ordered are all their movements, so perfect appears the harmony of their construction and design, yet so hidden by the obscurity of dis-

tance is the moving principle within, that by their own faith they seem to trust themselves where the foot of man dare not tread, and by their own hope they seem to be lured on to some distant point which the eye of man is unable to discern.

In a widely extended sea view there is unquestionably poetry enough to inspire the happiest lays, but the converse of this picture is easily drawn—and fatal to the poet's song would be the first view of the interior of any one of those gallant and stately ships about which we have been dreaming. The moving principle within, respecting which we have had such refined imaginings, is now embodied in a company of hardy sailors, whose rude laughter, and ruder oaths, are no less discordant to our ear, than offensive to our taste. It is true, that a certain kind of order and discipline prevails amongst them, but the wretched passengers below are lost for a time to all mental sensations, and suffering or sympathising with them, we soon forget the poetry of life.

There is poetry in the gush of sparkling waters that burst forth from the hill side in some lonely and sequestered spot, and flow on in circling eddies amongst the rocks and fern,

and tendrils of wild plants; on, on for ever—unexhausted, and yet perpetually losing themselves in the bosom of the silent and majestic river, where the hurry and murmur of their course is lost, like the restless passions that agitate the breast of man in the ocean of eternity: and there is poetry in the burst of the cataract that comes over the brow of the precipice with a seeming consciousness of its own power to bear down, and to subdue.

It is related of Richard Wilson, that when he first beheld the celebrated falls of Terni, he exclaimed “Well done, water!” Here, indeed, was no poetry—no association. His mind was too full of that mighty object as it first struck upon his senses, to admit at the moment of any relative idea; his exclamation was one of mere animal surprise, such as his dog might have uttered, had he possessed the organs of speech. And yet the same man, when he seized his pencil, and gave up his imagination to the full force of those impressions which, if we may judge by his works, few have felt more intensely, was able to pourtray nature, not merely seen as it is in any given section of the earth’s surface, but to group together, and embody in one scene, all that

is most harmonious in the quickly changing and diversified beauties of wood and water—hill and valley—sombre shade, and glowing sun-shine—deep solitudes, and resplendent heavens.

There is poetry in the hum of bees, when the orchards are in bloom, and the sun is shining in unclouded splendour upon the waving meadows, and the garden is richly spangled with spring flowers. There is poetry in the hum of the bee, because it brings back to us, as in a dream, the memory of by-gone days, when our hearts were alive to the happiness of childhood—the time when we could lie down upon the green bank and enjoy the stillness of summer's noon, when our hopes were in the blossoms of the orchard, our delight in the sunshine, our untiring rambles in the meadows, and our perpetual amusement in the scented flowers. Since these days, time has rolled over us with such a diversity of incident, bringing so many changes in our modes of living and thinking, that we have learned, perhaps at some cost, to analyse our feelings, and to say, rather than feel, that there is poetry in the hum of bees.

But let one of these honey-laden wanderers

find his way into our apartment, and while he struggles with frantic efforts to escape through the closed window, we cease to find pleasure in his busy hum.

There is poetry in the flowers that grow in sweet profusion upon wild and uncultivated spots of earth, exposing their delicate leaves to the tread of the rude inhabitants of the wilderness, and spreading forth their scented charms to the careless mountain wind—in the thousand, thousand little stars of beauty looking forth like eyes, with no eye to look again; or cups that seem formed to catch the dew drops; or spiral pyramids of varied hue shooting up from leafy beds, and pointing faithfully to the shining sky; or crowns of golden splendour mounted upon fragile stems; or purple wreaths that never touched a human brow; all bursting forth, blooming and then fading, with endless succession in the midst of untrodden wilds;—in rain and sunshine, in silent night, and glowing day, with an end and purpose in their brief existence inscrutable to the mind of man.

The flowers of the garden though possessing more richness and gorgeous beauty, are less poetical, because we see too clearly in their

arrangement and culture, the art and labour of man; we are reminded at every group of the work of the spade, and perceive at once and without mystery, why they have been planted in the exact spot where they now grow.

There is poetry in the first contemplation of those numerous islands which gem the southern ocean—poetry in the majestic hills that rise one above another, their varied peaks and precipices clear and bright in unclouded sunshine, and their very summits clothed with unfading verdure; while bursting from amongst their deep recesses are innumerable streams that glide down their rugged sides, now glancing out like threads of silver, now hidden in shade and darkness, until they find their way into the broad and silent lagoon, where the angry surf subsides, and the mountains, woods, and streams are seen again reflected in the glassy mirror of the unruffled water—unruffled, save by the rapid gliding of the light canoe, that darts among the coral rocks, and then lies moored in still water beneath some stately tree, whose leafy boughs form a welcome canopy of shade for the luxuriant revellers in that sunny clime.

Time was when those who had rejoiced over the first contemplation of this scene were compelled to mourn over the contrast which ignorance and barbarism presented on a nearer view, but now, blessed be the power that can harmonize the heart of man with all that is grateful and genial in the external world, the traveller approaching, and beholding this lovely picture, need no longer shrink from the horrors which a closer inspection formerly revealed.

If external nature abounds with poetry, how much more forcibly does it pervade the faculties and sentiments of the human mind. Consider only three—love, hope, and memory. What power even in the visions of the alchemist was ever able to transform like the passion of love? Investing what is real with all that we desire, converting deformity into loveliness, exchanging discord for harmony, giving to the eye, the exquisite faculty of beautifying whatever it beholds, and to the ear a secret charm that turns every sound to music. And hope would be hope no longer if it did not paint the future in the colours we most admire. Its very existence depends upon the power it possesses to sweeten to the latest dregs, the otherwise bitter cup of life. Yet love and hope

may be degraded by the false estimate we sometimes form of what is worthy of our admiration. Passion too often asserts her mastery over both, compelling her blind and willing slaves to call evil good, and good evil ; while memory, if not always faithful to her trust, is at least disposed to hold it charitably, and thus preserves in their genuine distinctness, the fairest passages of life, but kindly obscures those which are most revolting in remembrance. In looking back upon the past, how little that is sordid, mean, or selfish, appears conspicuous now. Past hours of simple, every-day enjoyment, are invested with a charm they knew not at the time. A veil is thrown over the petty cares of by-gone years—passion is disarmed of its earthborn violence, and sorrow looks so lovely in the distance, that we almost persuade ourselves it was better to weep such tears as we wept then, than to smile as we smile now.

But why pursue this theme? It is evident that neither sounds, objects, nor subjects of contemplation are poetical in themselves, but in their associations ; and that they are so just in proportion as these associations are intellectual and refined. Nature is full of poetry,

from the high mountain to the sheltered valley, from the bleak promontory to the myrtle grove, from the star-lit heavens to the slumbering earth; and the mind that can most divest itself of ideas and sensations belonging exclusively to matter, will be able to expatiate in the realms of nature with the most perfect fruition of delight.

INDIVIDUAL ASSOCIATIONS.

THE difference of taste not unfrequently found in persons whose station and habits of life are similar, may be attributed both to individual conformation, and to those instances of early bias received from local circumstances which none can remember, and which, consequently, no pen can record. That variety of taste is chiefly owing to the influence of association, is shown by those minor preferences or antipathies which certain individuals evince for things possessing no quality inherent in themselves to justify such peculiar choice or rejection, and which have no corresponding value in the opinion of mankind in general.

Without returning to the days of infancy, when the first impressions were made upon our

senses, when our eyes were first able to see, and our ears to hear, it would be impossible to trace to their origin all our peculiarities of taste and feeling, or to assign the precise reason why we are subject to sensations of pleasure or disgust from causes which do not influence the rest of mankind in a similar manner—sensations which, from their singularity, and, to others, apparent absurdity, necessarily fall under the stigma of caprice.

Who can say how far his peculiar ideas of beauty and melody may have been derived from the countenance of the kind nurse who first smiled upon him in his cradle, and the sweet voice that first sung him to sleep; or of deformity and discord from the harsh brow whose frowns he first learned to dread, and the voice whose threatening tones were followed by punishment and pain.

If the taste of one individual is gratified by a picture upon which a strong and vivid light is thrown, and another prefers that which exhibits the cool tints of a cloudy atmosphere, it is attributed to some peculiarity in their several organs of sight; but is it not equally possible to be in some measure owing to one having been too much confined to darkness in

his infancy, and the other painfully exposed to the glare of too much light?

These may appear but idle speculations, since we are, and ever must remain in want of that master key to the human understanding—the knowledge of the state of the infant mind, its degree of susceptibility, and the manner in which it first receives impressions through the organs of sense. So far as we can recollect, however, it is clear to all who will take the trouble to examine the subject, that strong partialities and prejudices are imbibed in very early life, before we are capable of reasoning, and that these sometimes remain with us to the last.

There are seldom two persons who agree exactly in their admiration of the proper names of individuals. One approves what the other rejects, and scarcely one instance in twenty occurs in which their feelings are the same: nor is it merely the harmony or discord of the sound which occasions their preference or dislike. Each attaches to the name in question a distinct character, most probably owing to some association of ideas between that name and a certain individual known in early life; and though they may have both known and

lived amongst the same individuals, it is hardly probable that two minds should have regarded them precisely in the same manner. Hence from different associations arises a difference of taste.

In the present state of society, there are few persons who have not, in the course of their reading, become familiarized with Scripture names earlier than with any other; and this one would suppose should lead to their being generally preferred and adopted. Yet so far from this being the case, they are many of them regarded with a degree of ridicule and disgust, which can only be accounted for by our first becoming acquainted with them before we have been inspired with love, gratitude, or reverence for the Record in which they are found. Nor is it easy to account for the perversion of the fine, full-sounding Roman names, in their usual application to our dogs, and other animals; and next to them, to those miserable outcasts from human fellowship, which a professedly Christian world has deemed unworthy of a Christian nomenclature—the negro slaves; unless that schoolboys have generally enjoyed the honour of naming their father's dogs, when they were more fami-

liar with Cæsar's Commentaries, than with the character of the illustrious Roman. Why are we not able for many years after our emancipation, to perceive and relish the beauties of those selections from the ablest poets, which we were compelled to learn by heart as punishments at school? It is because our first acquaintance with them was formed under sensations of pain and compulsion, which time is long in wearing out.

If by the mere sound of a name, such different sensations are excited in different minds, how much more extensive must be the variety of those called up by words of more comprehensive signification. Let us suppose four individuals—a newly-elected member of parliament, a tradesman, a pauper, and a poet—each at liberty to pursue his own reflections, when the word *winter* is suddenly introduced to his mind. The statesman immediately thinks of the next convocation of the representatives of the people, when he shall stand forth to make his maiden speech; of the important subjects that will probably be laid before the consideration of the house, of the part he shall feel himself called upon to take in the discussion of these, and how he may be able to act so as to

satisfy the claims of his constituents, and his conscience, without offending either. The tradesman thinks of his bills, and his bad debts; of the price of coals, and the winter fashions. The pauper thinks—and shivers while he thinks—of the cold blasts of that inclement season, of the various signs and prophecies that foretell a hard winter, and of how much, or rather how little the parish overseers will be likely to allow to his necessities for clothing, food, and fire. By a slight, and almost instantaneous transition of thought, one of these thinkers has already arrived at the idea of conscience, another at that of fashion, and a third at that of fire. But the poet (provided he be not identified with the pauper) passing over subjects of merely local interest, knows no bounds to his associations. His lively and unshackled fancy first carries him northward, to those frozen regions which man has visited but in thought. Here he floats through the thin and piercing air, then glides upon a sea of ice, or looks down from hills of everlasting snow; until wearied with the voiceless solitude, he seeks the abodes of man, and follows the fur-clad Laplander with his faithful reindeer over trackless and uncultivated wastes. But the poet,

though a wanderer by profession, yet still faithful to home and early attachments, returns after every wayward excursion to drink of his native well, and to enjoy the peace of his paternal hearth. Here, in the clime he loves best, he beholds a scene of picturesque and familiar beauty—a still and cloudless morning, when the hoar frost is glittering upon every spray, and the trees, laden with a fleecy burden, cast their deep shadows here and there upon the silvery and unsullied bosom of the sheeted earth. He sees the solitary robin perched upon the leafless thorn, and hears its winter song of melancholy sweetness—that plaintive touching strain to which every human bosom echoes with a sad response. But quickly comes the roaring blast, like a torrent rushing down from the hills. The light snow is tossed like foam upon the waves of the wind; and the mountain pine, shaking off the frosty spangles from his boughs, for one moment quails before the fury of the thundering tempest, and then stands erect again upon the craggy steep, where his forefathers have stood for ages. Night gathers in with darkness and dismay, and while the moaning of the venerable oak resounds through the forest like the voice of a mighty and un-

seen spirit, and the bellowing of the blast seems mingled with the wilder shrieks of bewildered travellers, or seamen perishing on the deep, the poet beholds in the distance the glimmering lights of some hospitable mansion, and in an instant he is transported to a scene of happiness, glowing with social comforts, festivity, and glee; where the affrighted wanderer finds safety, the weary are welcomed to repose, and the wretched exchange their tears for joy.

Impressions made upon our minds by local circumstances, are frequently of so deep and durable a nature, as to outlive all the accidents of chance and change which occur to us in after life. Should the poet, or the painter, in his study, endeavour to place before his mind's eye the picture of a brilliant sunset, he insensibly recalls that scenery in the midst of which his youthful imagination was first warmed into poetic life by the "golden day's decline." He sees, bright and gorgeous with sunbeams, the distant hill, which his boyish fancy taught him to believe it would be the height of happiness to climb;—the sombre woods that skirt the horizon—the valley, misty and indistinct below—the wandering river, whose glancing

waters are here and there touched as they gleam out, with the radiance of the resplendent west—and while memory paints again the long deep shadows of the trees that grew around his father's dwelling, he feels the calm of that peaceful hour mingling with the thousand associations that combine to form his most vivid and poetical idea of sunset.

In this manner we not unfrequently single out from the works of art some favourite object, upon which we bestow an interest so deep, a regard so earnest, that they wear the character of admiration which no perceptible quality in the object itself can justify, and which other beholders are unable to understand. In a collection of paintings we look around for those which are most worthy of general notice, when suddenly our attention is struck with one little unpretending picture, almost concealed in an obscure corner, and totally unobserved by any one beside. It is the representation of a village church—the very church where we first learned to feel, and, in part, to understand the solemnity of the Sabbath. Beside its venerable walls are the last habitations of our kindred; and beneath that dark and mournful yew is the ancient pastor's grave.

Here is the winding path so familiar to our steps, when we trod the earth more lightly than we do now—the stile on which the little orphan girl used to sit, while her brothers were at play—and the low bench beside the cottage-door, where the ancient dame used to pore over her Bible in the bright sunshine. Perhaps the wheels of Time have rolled over us with no gentle pressure since we last beheld that scene;—perhaps the darkness of our present lot makes the brightness of the past more bright. Whatever the cause may be, our gaze is fixed and fascinated, and we turn away from the more wonderful productions of art, to muse upon that little picture again, and again, when all but ourselves have passed it by without a thought.

It is not, however, the earliest impressions made upon the mind which are always the most lasting or vivid. We are all subject to the influence of strong and overpowering associations with circumstances which occur in after life, and of which we retain a clear recollection. We are apt to be deeply, yet differently affected by certain kinds of music. In the same apartment, and while the same air is sung or played by a minstrel un-

conscious of its secret power, some of the audience will be thrown into raptures of delight, applauding and calling forth the strain again with unabated enjoyment; while one, in whose sad heart the springs of memory are opened, will turn away unnoticed in that happy crowd, to hide the tears which the thoughts of home and early days, when that strain was first heard, have called forth from the eyes of a stranger in a strange land. "If I might always listen to that tune," exclaims one, "I should never know unhappiness again!" "Spare me that song of mirth," is the secret prayer of the stranger; "it belongs to my own country. It tells me of the beauty and gladness of my native land. Spare me that song of mirth; for my heart is sorrowful, and I am alone."

Innumerable are the instances of daily, and almost hourly occurrence, in which we perceive that some particular tone of feeling is excited, but know not whence it takes its rise; as we listen to the wild music of the Æolian harp, that varies perpetually from one melody to another. We see the thrilling chords, we hear the sweet and plaintive sound, but we know not with all our wisdom what particular note

the unseen minstrel will next produce, nor can we calculate the vibrations caused by his powerful but invisible hand.

When we hear the tender and affectionate expression, "I love this book because it was my mother's," we know at once why a book approved by a mother's judgment should be valued by a child; but when we hear any one say, "I prefer this room, this table, or this chair, to all others, because they belonged to my mother," the expression, though quite as common, and equally natural, is not so generally understood. The room may be the least commodious in the house, the table the least convenient, the chair the least easy, yet they are valued not the less, because they are associated with the image of one who was dear, perhaps more dear than any one will ever be again.

I have known the first wild rose of summer gathered with such faithful recollections, such deep and earnest love, such yearnings of the heart for by-gone pleasures, that for a moment its beauty was obscured by falling tears. The tolling of a bell after it has been heard for a departed friend, has a tone of peculiar and painful solemnity. The face of one whom we

have met with comparative indifference in a season of happiness, is afterwards hailed with delight when it is all that remains to us of the past. The pebble that was gathered on a distant shore, becomes valuable as a gem when we know that we shall visit that land no more. There is no sound, however simple or sweet, that may not be converted into discord when it calls up jarring sensations in the mind ; nor is there any melody in nature comparable to the tones of the voice that has once spoken to the heart.

Rousseau wept on beholding the little common flower that we call perriwinkle. He wept because he was alone, and it reminded him of the beloved friend at whose feet it had been gathered. I remember being affected by this circumstance at a very early age, and the association has become so powerful, that, in looking at this flower, I always feel a sensation of melancholy, and persuade myself that the pale blue star, half concealed beneath the dark green leaves, is like a soft blue eye that scarcely ventures to look up from beneath the gloom of sorrow.

The crowing of the cock is generally considered a lively and cheering sound ; yet I

knew one, who for many years could not hear a cock crow at midnight without sensations of anguish and horror, because it had once been painfully forced upon her notice while she was watching the dead.

A gentleman of my acquaintance, in speaking to me of his mother's death, which was sudden and unexpected, described the day on which this event took place, as one of those periods in our existence when the mind seems incapable of *feeling* what it knows to be a painful truth. He had retired to rest, with an indistinct idea of what had occurred, but remained unable to realize the extent of his calamity. It had been his mother's custom to take away his candle every night—perhaps to breathe a prayer at his bedside. As he laid his head upon the pillow, he saw the light standing as usual, but no gentle form approached, and in an instant he felt the full force of his bereavement. He was setting off in life with brighter hopes than fall to the lot of many; but that first and purest of earth's blessings—a mother's love, was lost to him for ever.

Associations of this kind, however, are not such as constitute the fittest subjects for the

poet ; because, from their local or particular nature, they excite no general interest. They may be powerful in the mind of the writer, but will fail to awaken in other minds a proportionate degree of feeling ; except when the sensible object, or particular fact described, is introduced merely as a medium for subjects of a nature to be generally felt and understood, such as memory, hope, or love. Thus the Poet may properly address an object of which he alone perceives the beauty, or describe a circumstance of which he alone feels the pathos, provided he does not dwell too long upon the object or circumstance, merely as such, but carries the mind onward, by some ingenious association, to recollections which they naturally recall, hopes which were then cherished, or love, whose illimitable nature may be connected with all things lovely. By dwelling exclusively upon one subject of merely local interest, and neglecting such relative ideas as are common to all, the most egregious blunders, in matters of taste, are every day committed. Witticisms are uttered, which, however entertaining to those who know to what circumstances they owe their value, excite no corresponding risibility in the wondering or

insensible hearers. Anecdotes are related, which, from being out of place or ill-timed, seem to fall from the lips of the speaker as a wearisome and empty sound. Subjects of conversation are introduced in mixed society, perhaps intensely interesting to one or two, but from which all others are shut out. Books are selected, and read aloud to those who will not listen. Pictures are exhibited to those who cannot see their beauty. Pleasures are proposed, which, from their want of adaptation, are converted into pain. Kind intentions are frustrated; and the best endeavours to be agreeable, rewarded with disappointment and ingratitude. In short, for want of that discriminating, versatile, and most valuable quality which mankind have agreed to call *tact*, and which might be fancifully described as the *nerve* of human society, many opportunities of enjoyment are wasted, many good people are neglected, and many good things are irrevocably lost.

It would be hard indeed if we might not indulge our individual fancies, by each mounting the hobby we like best. The absurdity consists in compelling others to ride with us, in forcing our favourites upon their regard,

and expecting from them the same tribute of admiration which we ourselves bestow. There is no moral law to prevent our being delighted with what is repulsive to others; but it is an essential part of good manners, to keep back from the notice of society such particular preferences—a great proof of good taste, so to discipline our feelings, that we derive the most enjoyment from what is generally pleasing.

GENERAL ASSOCIATIONS.

IN turning our attention to the subject of general associations, we enter upon a field so wide and fertile, that to select suitable materials for examination appears the only difficulty. All our most powerful and sublime ideas are common to mankind in a civilized state, and arise in the minds of countless multitudes from the same causes. By the stupendous phenomena of nature, as well as by the magnificent productions of art, we are all affected according to our various degrees of capability in precisely the same manner. We all agree in the impressions we receive from extreme cases, whether they belong to the majestic or the minute; and no one who retained the possession of his reason would be excited to laughter by a thunder storm, or to awe and

reverence by the tricks of a merry-andrew. But there are medium cases of a minor and more dubious nature, in which the poet's discriminating eye can best distinguish what is exalted or refined, puerile or base; and consequently what is most worthy of his genius. Nor let him who has openly committed himself in verse, believe that such distinction entitles him to make laws for his own accommodation, and observe or transgress the established rules of taste just as his own fancy may dictate. The same celestial fire which prompts his lay is warming humbler bosoms unmarked amongst the crowd; and mingled with the dense multitude which he disdains, are countless poets uncommitted, who constitute a tribunal from which there is no appeal; who must eventually sit in judgment upon his works, give the tone to public opinion, and pronouncing his irrevocable doom, consign him to oblivion or to fame.

Those who have taken little pains to inquire into the nature and origin of their mental sensations, often express instantaneously a correct judgment of works of art, from what they would be very likely to call a kind of instinct or intuitive perception of what is right or

wrong; but which might more philosophically be referred to combinations of ideas derived from certain impressions associated, compared, and established by a process of the mind which they took no note of at the time, and with which they have never made themselves acquainted. Of such is a great proportion of the multitude composed; and it is this fact which gives to public opinion that overpowering weight against which no single critic, or even select body of critics, can prevail.

The poet who is not a blind enthusiast, will learn by experience, if he know not without, that the public taste must be consulted in order to recommend himself to public approbation. He therefore gives himself up to the study of what is universally regarded as most ennobling, touching, or sublime. He endeavours to forget himself, and setting aside the pains and pleasures of his own limited experience as a little private store to draw upon when occasion may require, or as a secret lamp from which he may sometimes borrow light to rekindle his imagination, launches forth into the world of thought, and extracts from all existing or imaginable things that ethereal essence, which beautifies the aspect of

nature, elevates the soul of man, and gives even to his every-day existence such intensity of enjoyment, as those who look at facts only as they are recorded, and study matter merely as it is, can never know.

General associations must therefore occupy an important place in the consideration of all who would study the poetry of life; nor will such deem their time misspent in following up a close examination of some particular subjects with reference to this essential point.

Let us first consider that well known and familiar object, the human face, of which even single and distinct features have frequently been thought sufficiently important to inspire the poet's lay. From the earliest times, the forehead has been dignified with a kind of personality, and regarded as an index to the character of man, whether bold or bland, threatening or benign, disturbed or serene: nor is it in language peculiar to the poets only, that we speak of a man confronting his enemies with undaunted or threatening brow—or that he receives his sentence of punishment with a forehead undisturbed—that we are encouraged to hope for mercy by the bland or benign forehead of the judge—or bear adver-

sity with a brow serene. Physiognomists profess to read the natural character of man chiefly from the form of his forehead; but whether studied scientifically or not, we all know in an instant what is indicated by the simultaneous contraction and lowering of the brow; we know also, without much assistance from study of any kind, when the nature of the forehead is noble or mean, harsh or mild; we naturally look to the upper part of the face, in order to form those instantaneous opinions of our fellow-creatures at first sight, which are not unfrequently a near approach to truth; and we may with some degree of certainty read in the forehead, when at rest, what are the principal elements of character in those with whom we associate. But scarcely can a feeling be excited or a passion stirred, than the muscles of the forehead are agitated by a corresponding movement. How suddenly and strongly is the forehead affected by astonishment! and even in listening attentively to a common story, the eyebrows are occasionally elevated, and thus afford a sure indication that the hearer is interested, and that the narrator may proceed. How striking is the contraction of the forehead in deep and earnest thought!

How unspeakably mournful under the gloom of sorrow! How frightfully distorted by the violence of rage! How solemn and yet how lovely in its character of intellectual beauty! It is difficult to connect one idea of a gross or corporeal nature with the forehead; all its indications are those of mind, and most of them of a powerful, refined, or elevated character; from the Madonna, whom no painter has thought worthy of a high degree of intellectual grace, yet whose forehead invariably indicates a character mild, delicate, and pure, to the dying gladiator, whose expiring anguish is less of the body than the mind.

The forehead therefore is a subject well fitted for the poet's pen, and he may sing of its various qualifications without fear of transgressing the rules of good taste.

The eye is poetical in a still higher degree, because it possesses a greater facility in adapting itself to present circumstances, and reveals in greater minuteness and variety the passions and affections of the mind. Indeed, so perfect is the eye as an organ of intelligence, that it is more frequently spoken of in its figurative sense than in any other; and there is scarcely

a writer, however grave, whose pages are not embellished by frequent poetical expressions in which the eye is the principal agent; such as,—the language of the eye—the eye of the mind—the eye of omnipotence, and a countless multitude of figures, without which we should find it difficult to express our ideas, and which sufficiently prove how intimate and familiar is our acquaintance with the eye as a medium of intelligence, no less than as an organ of sense. With the universally intelligible expression of the eye, are associated our first ideas of pain or pleasure, fear or confidence: the infant naturally looks up into its mother's eye to read there the confirmation of her strange tones of anger or reproof, and if there is no condemnation in that oracle of truth, he feels that her words are but empty threats, returns to his gambols, and laughs again. The lover knows that his earnest suit is rejected if the eye of his mistress has no relenting in its glance; and the criminal who pleads for some mitigation of his sentence, looks for mercy in the eye of the judge.

It would be a fruitless expenditure of words to set about establishing the fact, that the eye

is poetical. Every poet capable of stringing a rhyme has proved it to the world; every heart capable of feeling has acknowledged it to be true.

But while thousands and tens of thousands are poetizing about the eye, no one dares venture upon the nose; a fact which can only be accounted for by our having no intellectual associations with this member, and being accustomed to regard it merely for its sense of smell, or as an essential ornament to the face. The nose is incapable of expressing any emotion of mind, except those which are vulgar or grotesque—such as laughter or gross impertinence. It is true, the nostrils are distended by any effort of daring, but it is rather with animal than moral courage, such as might animate a barbarian or a horse. It is indeed a curious, but incontrovertible fact, that while the enraptured slave of beauty is at liberty to expend his poetic fire in composing sonnets to his lady's eye, no sooner does he descend to the adjoining feature, than the poetry of his lay is converted into burlesque, and he is himself dismissed as a profaner of love and the muses.

The mouth, though frequently spoken of in a figurative sense, is less poetical than the

eye ; most probably because of its immediate connection with the functions of the body. In the language of poetry, the lips and the tongue are generally substituted for the mouth ; the one being associated with the more refined idea of a smile, and the other with the organs of speech.

Every one sees at the first glance, that the chin is not a subject for poetry ; for though its peculiar formation may be strongly indicative of boldness or timidity, as well as some meaner traits of character, it is so incapable of changing with the changing emotions of the mind, that the chin must remain to be considered merely as a feature of the face and nothing more.

These notions, derived from the study of the human countenance, may appear to give to the subject a greater degree of importance than it really deserves ; for there are many individuals not aware that they have ever bestowed more physiognomical study upon the face of man, than upon the plate from which they dine. But let one of these relate his favourite story to a stranger, who neither raises his eyes nor his eyebrows while he is speaking, whose mouth never for one moment relaxes into a smile, and who gives no sign that he is in-

erected by any other motion of the head or face; the teller of the story, how little soever he may think he has studied the subject, will perceive that he has wasted his words upon one who could not, or would not appreciate their value. This fact he knows with certainty, and without being told; because from childhood he has always been accustomed to see earnest attention accompanied by certain movements, or positions of the face, and has observed, that the same face would be very differently affected by weariness or absence of mind. Thus we gather knowledge from experience every day without being aware of it, and are satisfied with the possession of our gain without inquiring from whence it was obtained.

The sentiments upon which mankind are generally agreed respecting the beauty or deformity of the human countenance, originate more frequently in association, than without examination of the subject we should be disposed to allow. How often are we struck with a similarity between certain faces and certain animals of the brute creation; and just in proportion as the resemblance is gross and brutal, we regard it with disgust and horror.

The ancients established for themselves a standard of beauty, as far removed from such resemblance as the form of the human countenance would allow; and sometimes in their contempt for the rude expression of animal life, they rushed into the opposite extreme, and extinguished all apparent capability of living—in their anxiety to avoid the mark of the beast, they lost sight of the characteristics of the man. The Egyptians appear to have embodied in their sculpture the first, or rather the embryo idea of the sublime; and their huge, massive, and unmeaning heads, scarcely chisselled into form, are as far removed in their expression from what is gross, as what is human. The Grecians knew better what was requisite to the gratification of a refined and intellectual taste. They knew, that in order to ennoble their representations of the countenance of man, it must not only be divested of all resemblance to the brute, but that to rouse the human bosom to sensations of admiration and delight, it must be enlivened with the expression of human intelligence. Had they proceeded but one step farther in their imitation of nature as it is—had they consulted the sympathies and affections of

humanity, they might have immortalized the genius of the times by productions equally sublime, but infinitely more touching and beautiful.

As the Grecians reasoned and acted in the early stage of civilization, so we, in forming our earliest notions of the abstract nature of beauty, reason perhaps unconsciously to ourselves. We see that a low and rapidly-retreating forehead, sunken eyes, short nose, distended and elevated at the tip, wide mouth, and scarcely perceptible chin, are common to animals of the most repulsive character; and we loathe the image of a human animal in any way resembling these. With that propensity inherent in our nature to rush towards the opposite of everything which excites dislike or pain, we create a false taste, and affect to admire what is not to be found in real life. And as most living faces have some faint touch of resemblance to the animal creation, we are more enraptured than the rules of physiognomy would warrant, with the cold sublime of Grecian statuary. Nor is this taste likely to be corrected, because we study these marble beauties as statues only, and consequently find in them all that is required for loveliness

in repose ; but could a Grecian divinity step down from her pedestal, and come to visit our couch in sorrow, bend over us in sickness, or meet us at the door of our home after long absence and weary travel ; we should then perceive the harsh coldness of what are called celestial brows, but which were certainly never intended to relax into the expression of affability, kindness, or sympathy.

The faces which are universally considered most interesting, are those which vary with every emotion of the soul ; which seldom fail to please in general society, by keeping up a sort of corresponding indication with the feelings excited by different subjects under discussion. Yet these variations must not be too rapid, they must not correspond with every trifling change, or the expression will become puerile ; because we are sure that so many different emotions felt in quick succession must neutralize each other ; and we consequently doubt whether any feeling in connection with such a countenance can be deep or lasting.

There is, however, beyond this charm of the human face, another of a more abstruse and intellectual character, one which more properly

entitles it to be called poetical; and here it may not be improper to remark, that a certain degree of mystery enhances the value of almost all our mental enjoyments. The human mind is so constituted, that it feels peculiar gratification in being occasionally thrown upon its own resources. Instead of being constantly supplied with food selected and prepared for its use, it delights in being sometimes permitted to issue forth on an excursion of discovery, and is satisfied on such occasions with very uncertain aliment. Mystery offers to the mind this kind of liberty. We dwell the longest upon that face which reveals a great deal, but not all of what the thoughts are engaged with; we recur with redoubled interest to those subjects which we do not on first examination fully understand.

But to return to the human countenance. We meet with many faces animated, lively, and quickly affected by the topics or events of the moment. We remark of such, that they are pleasing, and our admiration ends here. But if amongst the crowd we distinguish one possessed of this capability in the extreme, not always using it, however, but sometimes looking grave and abstracted, re-

tiring, as it were, from the confusion or the folly of the passing scene, to listen for awhile to the inner voice—the voice of the spirit, while the “tablet of unutterable thoughts is traced” upon it; we immediately begin to ponder upon what may be the secret springs from whence flow the thoughts, feelings, and affections of such a character. We bestow upon it much of what is closely interwoven with our own. We invest it with imaginary powers, and believe it to be possessed of resources from which the mind may draw as from unfailing wells, until at last we seem to have established an ideal intercourse with the mysterious unknown, and to have made a friend by no other agency than the sympathy of the soul.

What is most generally esteemed in society, might be easily discovered by what the greatest number of individuals are disposed to affect. Thus, while the affectation of attention is often substituted for attention itself, while dull faces are compelled to brighten into smiles without the animation of joy, while brows are stretched into a mockery of good humour when good humour is wanting; there are deeper practitioners playing off the art of

being mysterious, dealing in half-revealed secrets, concealing their own names, looking abstracted by design, and forming plans for their own dignity, mimicking the Corsair, and fancying they resemble Lord Byron; with a hundred absurdities besides, too gross or too contemptible to enumerate, yet all tending to prove that there is a disposition prevailing amongst mankind to admire, and delight in what is mysterious.

If we are generally agreed in our notions of the beauty or deformity of the human face, we are still more unanimous in our estimate of that of animal form in general. Some it is true may prefer a tall or a broad figure, and others may choose exactly the opposite, but we are all of one opinion on the subject of symmetry and proportion; because our associations are the same, and we bestow the highest degree of admiration on the bodies, both of men and animals, when they possess the combined qualities of firmness, flexibility, and adaptation.

All who have bestowed any attention upon the horse, must regard this noble animal with feelings of admiration and delight. It needs not the aid of scientific study to perceive in

what perfection he possesses the combined qualities of strength and swiftness, endurance and facility of motion. Had one of these qualities been wanting—had he been feeble or inactive, had his power or his patience been soon expended, had he moved with awkwardness or difficulty, our admiration would have been considerably less, and we should probably now look with as little pleasure on the horse as on the rhinoceros. Again, every one thinks the stag a beautiful animal, perhaps the most beautiful in nature; but the stag wants the majestic power of the horse to give him an aspect of nobility, and therefore our admiration of him is of a qualified and secondary nature. In the same manner it would not be difficult to trace the correspondence of our ideas through the whole extent of animal creation, except only where the chain of association is broken by accidental or local circumstances; and happy is it for the human race, that they are so constituted as to be disposed unani- mously to avoid what is repulsive, and are able to partake in social concord of the exquisite enjoyment of admiring what is beautiful.

Had the mind of man been composed of heterogeneous or discordant elements, he must have

wanted the grand principle of happiness—sympathy with his fellow creatures. He might unquestionably have possessed his own enjoyments, but he must have been a selfish and isolated being. His intellectual powers might possibly have been cultivated, but without the stimulus of social affection, their growth must have been without grace, and their fruit without value. To compute the distance of the planets, to measure the surface of the earth, and penetrate into its secret mines, are occupations which might be carried on by man in his solitary and unconnected character; but in order that he might enjoy the benefit of a high tone of moral feeling, and thus be fitted for a state of existence where knowledge is only less supreme than love, it was necessary that the general current of his feelings should be softened and refined, by innumerable springs of tenderness and affection, flowing through the finer sensibilities of his nature, and filling that ocean of enjoyment, of which the human family have drunk together in unity since the world began, and may continue to drink for generations yet to come, without fear that the fountains should be sealed, or the waters should become less pure.

THE POETRY OF FLOWERS.

THERE are few natural objects more poetical in their general associations than flowers ; nor has there ever been a poet, simple or sublime, who has not adorned his verse with these specimens of nature's cunning workmanship. From the majestic sunflower, towering above her sisters of the garden, and faithfully turning to welcome the god of day, to the little humble and well-known weed that is said to close its crimson eye before impending showers, there is scarcely one flower which may not from its loveliness, its perfume, its natural situation, or its classical association, be considered highly poetical.

As the welcome messenger of spring, the snowdrop claims our first regard ; and countless are the lays in which the praises of this

little modest flower are sung. The contrast it presents of green and white, (ever the most pleasing of contrasts to the human eye,) may be one reason why mankind agree in their admiration of its simple beauties; but a far more powerful reason is the delightful association by which it is connected with the idea of returning spring; the conviction that the vegetable world through the tedious winter months has not been dead but sleeping; and that long nights, fearful storms, and chilling blasts, have a limitation and a bound assigned them, and must in their appointed time give place to the fructifying and genial influence of spring. Perhaps we have murmured (for what is there in the ordinations of Providence at which man will not dare to murmur?) at the dreariness of winter. Perhaps we have felt the rough blast too piercing to accord with our artificial habits. Perhaps we have thought long of the melting of the snow that impeded our noon-day walk. But it vanishes at last; and there, beneath its white coverlid, lies the delicate snowdrop, so pure and pale, so true an emblem of hope, and trust, and confidence, that it might teach a lesson to the desponding, and show the useless and inactive how invaluable

are the stirrings of that energy that can work out its purpose in secret, and under oppression, and be ready in the fulness of time to make that purpose manifest and complete. The snowdrop teaches also another lesson. It marks out the progress of time. We cannot behold it without feeling that another spring has come, and immediately our thoughts recur to the events which have occurred since last its fairy bells were expanded. We think of those who were near and dear to us then. It is possible they may never be near again; it is equally possible they may be dear no longer. Memory is busy with the past; until anticipation takes up the chain of thought, and we conjure up, and at last shape out in characters of hope, a long succession of chances and changes to fill up the revolving seasons which must come and go before that little flower shall burst forth in its loveliness again. Happy is it for those who have so counted the cost of the coming year, that they shall not find at the end they have expended either hope or desire in fruitless speculations.

It is of little consequence what flower comes next under consideration. A few specimens will serve the purpose of proving, that these

lovely productions of nature are, in their general associations, highly poetical. The primrose is one upon which we dwell with pleasure proportioned to our taste for rural scenery, and the estimate we have previously formed of the advantages of a peaceful and secluded life. In connection with this flower, imagination pictures a thatched cottage standing on the slope of the hill, and a little woody dell, whose green banks are spangled all over with yellow stars, while a troop of rosy children are gambolling on the same bank, gathering the flowers, as we used to gather them ourselves, before the toils and struggles of mortal conflict had worn us down to what we are now; and thus presenting to the mind the combined ideas of natural enjoyment, innocence, and rural peace—the more vivid, because we can remember the time when something like this was mingled with the cup of which we drank—the more touching, because we doubt whether, if such pure drops were still there, they would not to our taste have lost their sweetness.

The violet, while it pleases by its modest, retiring beauty, possesses the additional charm

of the most exquisite of all perfumes, which, inhaled with the pure and invigorating breezes of spring, always brings back in remembrance a lively conception of that delightful season. Thus, in the language of poetry, "the violet-scented gale" is synonymous with those accumulated and sweetly-blended gratifications which we derive from odours, flowers, and balmy breezes; and above all, from the contemplation of renovated nature, once more bursting forth into beauty and perfection.

The jessamine, also, with its dark green leaves, and little silver stars, saluting us with its delicious scent through the open casement, and impregnating the whole atmosphere of the garden with its sweetness, has been sung and celebrated by so many poets, that our associations are with their numbers, rather than with any intrinsic quality in the flower itself. Indeed, whatever may have first established the rank of flowers in the poetical world, they have become to us like notes of music, passed on from lyre to lyre; and whenever a chord is thrilled with the harmony of song, these lovely images present themselves, neither impaired in their beauty, nor exhausted

of their sweetness, for having been the medium of poetic feeling ever since the world began.

It is impossible to expend a moment's thought upon the lily, without recurring to that memorable passage in the sacred volume : " Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow. They toil not, neither do they spin, and yet I say unto you, that Solomon in all his glory, was not arrayed like one of these." From the little common flower called heart's ease, we turn to that well known passage of Shakspeare, where the fairy king so beautifully describes the "little western flower." And the forget-me-not has a thousand associations tender and touching, but unfortunately, like many other sweet things, rude hands have almost robbed it of its charm. Who can behold the pale Narcissus, standing by the silent brook, its stately form reflected in the glassy mirror, without losing themselves in that most fanciful of all poetical conceptions, in which the graceful youth is described as gazing upon his own beauty, until he becomes lost in admiration, and finally enamoured of himself : while hopeless echo sighs herself away into a sound, for the love, which, having centred in such an

object, was neither to be bought by her cares, nor won by her despair.

Through gardens, fields, forests, and even over rugged mountains, we might wander on in this fanciful quest after remote ideas of pleasurable sensation connected with present beauty and enjoyment; nor would our search be fruitless so long as the bosom of the earth afforded a receptacle for the germinating seed, so long as the gentle gales of summer continued to waft them from the parent stem, or so long as the welcome sun looked forth upon the ever-blooming garden of nature.

One instance more, and we have done. The "lady rose," as poets have designated this queen of beauty, claims the latest, though not the least consideration in speaking of the poetry of flowers. In the poetic world, the first honours have been awarded to the rose, for what reason it is not easy to define; unless from its exquisite combination of perfume, form, and colour, which have entitled this sovereign of flowers in one country to be mated with the nightingale, in another, to be chosen, with the distinction of red and white, as the badge of two honourable and royal houses. It would be difficult to trace the supremacy of the rose

to its origin; but mankind have so generally agreed in paying homage to her charms, that our associations in the present day are chiefly with the poetic strains in which they are celebrated. The beauty of the rose is exhibited under so many different forms, that it would be impossible to say which had the greatest claim upon the regard of the poet; but certainly those kinds which have been recently introduced, or those which are reared by unnatural means, with care and difficulty, are to us the least poetical, because our associations with them are comparatively few, and those few relate chiefly to garden culture.

After all the pains that have been taken to procure, transplant, and propagate the rose, there is one kind perpetually blooming around us through the summer months, without the aid or interference of man, which seems to defy his art to introduce a rival to its own unparalleled beauty—the common wild rose; so luxuriant, that it bursts spontaneously into blushing life, sometimes crowning the hoary rock with a blooming garland, and sometimes struggling with the matted weeds of the wilderness, yet ever finding its way to the open day, that it may bask and smile, and look up

with thankfulness to the bright sun, without whose rays its cheek would know no beauty—so tender, that the wild bee which had nestled in its scented bosom when that sun went down, returns in the morning and beholds the colour faded from its cheek, while by its side an infant rose is rising with the blush of a cherub, unfolding its petals to live its little day, and then, having expended its sweetness, to die like its fair sisters, without murmur or regret. Blooming in the sterile waste, this lovely flower is seen unfolding its fair leaves where there is no beauty to reflect its own, and thus calling back the heart of the weary traveller to thoughts of peace and joy—reminding him that the wilderness of human life, though rugged and barren to the discontented beholder, has also its sweet flowers, not the less welcome for being unlooked for, nor the less lovely for being cherished by a hand unseen.

There is one circumstance connected with the rose, which renders it a more true and striking emblem of earthly pleasure than any other flower—*it bears a thorn*. While its odorous breath is floating on the summer gale, and its blushing cheek, half hid amongst the

sheltering leaves, seems to woo and yet shrink from the beholder's gaze, touch but with adventurous hand the garden queen, and you are pierced with her protecting thorns: would you pluck the rose and weave it into a garland for the brow you love best, that brow will be wounded: or place the sweet blossom in your bosom, the thorn will be there. This real or ideal mingling of pain and sorrow, with the exquisite beauty of the rose, affords a never-ending theme to those who are best acquainted with the inevitable blending of clouds and sunshine, hope and fear, weal and woe, in this our earthly inheritance.

With everything fair, or sweet, or exquisite in this world, it has seemed meet to that wisdom which appoints our sorrows, and sets a bound to our enjoyments, to affix some stain, some bitterness, or some alloy, which may not inaptly be called, in figurative language, a thorn. St. Paul emphatically speaks of a "thorn in the flesh," and from this expression, as well as from his earnestness in having prayed thrice that it might be removed, we conclude it must have been something particularly galling to the natural man. We hear of the thorn of ingratitude, the thorn of envy, the thorn of

unrequited love—indeed of thorns as numerous as our pleasures; and few there are who can look back upon the experience of life, without acknowledging that every earthly good they have desired, pursued, or attained, has had its peculiar thorn. Who has ever cast himself into the lap of luxury, without finding that his couch was strewed with thorns? Who has reached the summit of his ambition, without feeling on that exalted pinnacle that he stood on thorns? Who has placed the diadem upon his brow, without perceiving that thorns were thickly set within the royal circlet? Who has folded to his bosom all that he desired of earth's treasures, without feeling that bosom pierced with thorns? All that we enjoy in this world, or yearn to possess, has this accompaniment. The more intense the enjoyment, the sharper the thorn; and those who have described most feelingly the inner workings of the human heart, have unfailingly touched upon this fact with the melancholy sadness of truth.

Far be it from one who would not willingly fall under the stigma of ingratitude, to disparage the nature, or the number of earthly pleasures—pleasures which are spread before

us without price or limitation, in our daily walk, and in our nightly rest—pleasures which lie scattered around our path when we go forth upon the hills, or wander in the vallies, when we look up to the starry sky, or down to the fruitful earth—pleasures which unite the human family in one bond of fellowship, surround us at our board, cheer us at our fire-side, smooth the couch on which we slumber, and even follow our wandering steps long—long after we have ceased to regard them with gratitude or joy. I speak of the thorn which accompanes these pleasures not with murmuring or complaint. I speak of the wounds inflicted by this thorn with a living consciousness of their poignancy and anguish ; because exquisite and dear as mere earthly pleasures may sometimes be, I would still contrast them with such as are not earthly. I would contrast the thorn and the wound, the disappointment and the pain which accompany all such pleasures as are merely temporal, with the fulness of happiness, the peace, and the crown, accompanying those which are eternal.

THE POETRY OF TREES.

IN contemplating the external aspect of nature, trees, in their infinite variety of form and foliage, appear most important and conspicuous ; yet so many are the changes which they undergo from the influence of the sun and the atmosphere, that it would be useless to attempt to speak of the associations belonging to this class of natural productions abstractedly, and detached from collateral circumstances. What poet, for instance, would describe the rich foliage of the summer woods, without the radiance of the summer sun ; the wandering gale that waves their leafy boughs ; the mountain side to which their knotted roots are clinging ; the green valley where they live and flourish, safe from raging storms ; and the murmuring stream, over which their branches

bend and meet. There is, however, a marked distinction in the character of different trees, and a general agreement amongst mankind in the relative ideas connected with each particular species.

It is scarcely necessary to repeat how essential to our notions of perfection is the beauty of *fitness*—that neither colour, form, nor symmetry, nor all combined in one object, can command our unqualified admiration without *adaptation*; and that the mind, by a sort of involuntary process, and frequently unconsciously to itself, takes note of the right application of means, and the relation of certain causes with their natural effects. Thus we admire the stately pine upon the mountain, not merely because the eye is gratified by a correspondence between its spiral form pointing upward towards the sky, and the high projecting pinnacles of rock, unbroken by the steps of time; but because we know that in consequence of this particular form, it is peculiarly adapted to sustain without injury the tempestuous gales which prevail in those inhospitable regions where it chiefly grows. There is something fierce, bristling, and defensive, in the very aspect of the pine; as if it set at nought the

hollow roar of the tempest through its scanty foliage, and around its firm, unshaken stem, while it stands like a guardian of the mountain wilds, armed at all points, and proudly looking down upon the flight of the eagle, and the wreaths of wandering clouds that flit across the wilderness of untrodden snow. But plant a single pine upon the gentle slope of a green lawn, amongst lilachs, and laburnums, and tender flowering shrubs, the charm of association is broken, and the veteran of the rugged and mountainous waste is shorn of his honours; like a patriot chief, submitting himself to the polished chains of society at the court of his tyrant conqueror.

The oak, the monarch of the woods, presents to the contemplative beholder innumerable associations by which his mind is plunged into the profound ideas of grandeur, space, and time. We are first struck with the majestic form and character of this tree—the mass of its foliage, the depth and extent of its shadow, and the tremendous power of resistance bodied forth in its gnarled and twisted boughs; but above all other considerations connected with it, we are affected almost with reverence by the lapse of time required to bring those pro-

digious branches to perfection, and the many, many tides of human feeling that must ebb and flow, before those firmly knotted roots shall yield to the process of decay. In the natural course of meditation to which such a subject leads, we consider the striking truth, that while nations have bowed and trembled beneath successive tyrants, until by the wonted course of nature, the terrors of the oppressed have given place to the reckless desperation that works its way, by the overthrow of empires, the destruction of thrones, and the scattering of multitudes—while the laws and the religion of half the world have been revolutionized, and what was once deemed a virtue has gradually become punishable as a crime—while sterile wastes have been reclaimed, and fertilized, and made fruitful, by the power and industry of successive generations of men, and arts and commerce have wrought wonders which our unsophisticated forefathers would have pronounced miraculous—the same oak has stood, perhaps at one time the witness of Druidical rites, at another affording shelter to the simple and unlettered peasant tending the herds of swine that fed upon its falling acorns : until, years rolling on, revolving summers

crowning its brow with verdant beauty, and hoary winter scattering that beauty to the winds, have left it for our warning, an emblem of fallen majesty—its once sturdy boughs no sooner attacked by the worm of destruction within, than assailed, and torn, and broken by the merciless blast without.

Striking and magnificent as the oak unquestionably is in its peculiar attitude and growth, presenting at one view the combined ideas of ability to resist the strong, and power to defend the weak, it is yet scarcely less majestic than beautiful. What a combination of gorgeous hues its autumnal foliage displays ! The eye of the painter revels in its sombre glory, its burnished hue, and its wild fantastic garniture of green and gold, contrasted with its own hoary stem, and the depth of shadow that is thrown by the rays of the declining sun in lengthening gloom over the quiet earth.

Nor is it merely with the outward aspect of this tree that our most powerful associations are connected. In a nation perpetually exulting in her maritime supremacy, we have learned to regard the oak as forming a sort of bulwark for the defence of our liberties. Thus the British sailor calls upon his comrades by the

proud title of "hearts of oak," and England is not unfrequently described as being protected by her "oaken walls."

There are, besides these, many other characters or points of consideration, in which we regard the oak with feelings of respect, and sometimes with poetical interest. Perhaps it is not least in the scale of importance, that many ancient and stately apartments, dedicated to solemn or religious purposes, are lined with panels of the wood of this tree. The same wood, beautifully carved and deepened into gloomy magnificence by the sombre influence of time, forms one of the principal ornaments in many religious houses; and when we look back to the customs of our ancestors, and the station which they occupied, with that respect which we naturally feel for their boasted hospitality, good cheer, and substantial magnificence, we seldom fail to surround them in imagination with goodly wainscoting of oak, to place a log of the same wood upon the blazing hearth, and to endow them with powers both mental and bodily, firm, stable, and unbending as this sturdy tree.

Amongst the trees of the forest, the elm may very properly be placed next in rank to the

oak, from its majestic size and importance. Yet the elm has a very different character, and consequently excites in the contemplative mind a different train of associations and ideas. The massive and umbrageous boughs, or rather arms of the elm, stretching forth at right angles with its stately stem, present to the imagination a picture of calm dignity rather than defensive power. From the superficial manner in which the roots of this tree are connected with the earth, it is ill calculated to sustain the force of the tempest, and is frequently torn from its hold and laid prostrate on the ground by the gale, whose violence appears to be unheeded by its brethren of the forest. In painting, or in ideal picture-making, we plant the elm upon the village green, a sort of feudal lord of that little peopled territory; or in stately rows skirting the confines of the dead, where the deep shadow from its dark green foliage falls upon the quiet graves, and the long rank grass, and on the village church, when from her grey sides and arched windows she reflects the rays of the setting sun, and looks, in her silence and solemnity, like a sister to those venerable trees. There are no gorgeous hues in the foliage of the elm, no light waving,

dancing, or glistening amongst its heavy boughs. All is grave majesty; and when we see the smoke of the cottage slowly ascending, and clearly revealed against the sombre darkness of the elm, we think of the labourer returning to his evening meal, the birds folding their weary wings, the coo of the wood pigeon, the gentle fall of evening dew, the lull of winds and waves, the universal calm of nature, and a thousand associations rush upon us, connecting that lovely and untroubled scene with vast and profound ideas of solemnity and repose.

To the willow belongs a character peculiarly its own. It has no stateliness, or majesty, or depth of shadow, to strike the senses and set the imagination afloat; but this mournful tree possesses a claim upon our attention, as having become the universal badge of sorrow, fancifully adopted by the victims of despair, and worn as a garland by the broken-hearted. It has also a beauty and a charm of its own. It carries us in idea to green pastures, and peaceful herds that browse in deep meadows by the side of some peaceful river, whose sleepy waters, silently gliding over their weedy bed, seem to bear away our anxious and conflicting thoughts along with them.

Seated by the rude and ancient-looking stem of this tree, we listen to the soft whispering of the wind among its silvery leaves, and gaze upon the glassy surface of the slowly moving stream, just rippled here and there by a stray branch projecting from the flowery bank, or a fairy forest of reeds springing up in spite of the ceaseless and invincible flow of that un-failing tide. We gaze, until the precise distinctions of past, present, and future fade away—the ocean of time flows past us like that silent river (would it were as unruffled in its real course); and while retaining a dim and mysterious consciousness of our own existence, we lose all remembrance of its rough passages, all perception of its present bitterness, and all apprehension of its future perils. From such unprofitable musings, if too frequently indulged, we awake to a melancholy state of feeling, of which the willow has, by the common consent of mankind, become emblematical. Morbid, listless, and inactive, we shrink from the stirring necessities of life; we behold the happy flocks still feeding, and almost wish, that like them, we could be content with a rich pasture as the bound of our ambition—like them live, die, and be forgotten. The dreamy si-

lence of those low damp fields increases our melancholy, and the pale and mournful aspect of the willow, prematurely hoary, becomes an emblem of our own fate and condition. It grows, not erect and stately like the stern elm, or bold and free like the waving ash, but stooping obliquely over the stream, or, shrinking from its companions with distorted limbs, tells to the morbid and imaginative beholder, a sad tale of early blight, or the rough dealing of rude and adverse winds. The loiterer still lingers, loath to leave a spot where one bitter root may yet remain unappropriated. He listens while he lingers, and thinks he hears the willow whispering its sorrows to the passing gale. The gale blows more freshly, and the willow then seems to sigh and shiver with the newly-awakened agonies of despair.

Thus can the distorted eye of melancholy look on every object with a glass of its own colouring, and thus it is possible one of our most common and unimportant trees, naturally growing in the familiar walks of man, in the small enclosure near his door, the green paddock, or the luxuriant meadow, may have acquired by the sanction of feeling, not of reason,

its peculiar character as an emblem of sorrow and gloom.

The weeping willow, as being more gracefully mournful, might very properly have claimed that attention which has been given to the common and plebeian members of its family ; but the weeping willow, while it has in this country fewer natural associations, is burdened, and robbed of its poetic character by a great number of such as are neither natural nor pleasing. Could we think of this elegant and picturesque tree only in its most appropriate situation, drooping over the tomb of Napoleon, or could we have beheld this tomb itself, without its infinitely multiplied representations in poonah and every other kind of painting, we might then have enjoyed ideas and sensations connected with it of the most touching and exquisite nature. But, alas ! our first failure in drawing has been upon the dangling boughs of the weeping willow ; our first sonnet has been addressed to this pathetic tree ; our first flourish in fancy needle-work has depicted a white urn delicately stitched with shining silk, and long green threads suspended over it, in mockery of its drooping branches.

But above all, we have seen in the square ell of garden fronting those tall thin dwellings about town, where a squeezed and narrow neighbour jostles up on each side, leaving just room enough for a tin verandah, but no space to breathe or move, still less to think or feel;—we have seen, laden with a summer's dust, the countless little stunted weeping willows that throw aloft, as if in search of purer air, their slender, helpless arms, and would weep if they could, yea, cry aloud, at this merciless malappropriation of their defenceless beauty.

These impressions must therefore necessarily be obliterated, and others, less vulgar and profane, be deeply impressed upon the mind, before the weeping willow can be established in that rank which it deserves to hold amongst objects whose general associations are poetical.*

Turning from the consideration of such trees as belong to the forest, the field, or the grove, to those which are reared and cultivated for domestic purposes; we find, even here, a world

* It is a fact now generally known, that the first weeping willow grown in England, was planted in Pope's garden at Twickenham, and is said to have been sent from Turkey, with a present from his friend, Lady Mary Wortley Montague.

of ideas and associations, which, if not highly poetical, are fraught with the satisfaction of home comforts, and the interest of local attachments. In travelling through a fertile country, thickly peopled, not with the haggard, rude, or careless-looking labourers at the loom, but with a quiet and peaceful peasantry, whose delight is in the gardens, the fields, and the flocks which their fathers tended before them, how beautiful, in the season of their blossom, are the numerous orchards, neatly fenced in, and stud-ding the landscape all over with little islands of rich promise, where the brightest tints of the rose, and the fairest of the lily, mingle with odorous perfume in all the luxuriant profusion of nature! Again, when the harvest is over, and the golden fruit, perfected by a summer's sun, is suspended in variegated clusters from every bough, how delightful is the contemplation of that rural and picturesque scene!—how sweetly the ideas it presents to the mind are blended with our love of nature and natural enjoyments, and our gratitude for the bounty and goodness of a gracious Providence.

Descending to the class of inferior trees, or rather plants, our poetical associations increase

in proportion as these are more picturesque, graceful, or parasitical; and consequently are more easily woven into the landscape, either real or imaginary, which forms the subject of contemplation. Amongst such, the common wild heath is by no means the least important; nor are we, on first consideration, aware for how large a proportion of our admiration of mountain scenery we are indebted to the rich purple hue which is thrown by this plant over the rugged sides of the hills, otherwise too cold and stony in their aspect to gratify the eye. With the idea of the heath we connect the path of the lonely traveller, or the silence of untrodden wilds; the haunt of the timid moor fowl, the hum of the wandering bee, or the gush of unseen water in the deep ravines of the mountains, working its way amongst the rocks, through moss, and fern, and matted weeds, until at length it sparkles up in the clear sunshine, and then goes dancing, and leaping, yet ever murmuring, like a pleased but fretful child, on—on towards the bosom of the silent lake below.

But above all other vegetable productions, neither trees nor flowers excepted, the ivy is perhaps the most poetical. And why? not

merely because its leaves are "never sere," nor because it hangs in fanciful festoons, glittering yet gloomy, playful yet sad; but because it does what so few things in nature will do—it clings to, and beautifies the ruin—it shrinks not from the fallen column—it covers with its close embrace the rugged face of desolation, and conceals beneath its rich and shining mantle the ravages made by the hand of time—the wreck which the tempest has wrought.

Besides this highly poetical idea, which forces itself upon every feeling mind, the ivy has other associations, deeply interesting in their character. It requires so many years to bring it to the perfection necessary for those masses of foliage, and dark recesses of mysterious gloom, which its most picturesque form presents, that we naturally connect with this plant the ideas of solemnity which are awakened by reflecting on the awful lapse of time. The ivy too is chiefly seen upon the walls of religious houses, either perfect or ruinous, where its heavy clusters of matted leaves, with their deep shadow, afford a shelter and a hiding place for the bat and the owl, and, in the ideas of the irrational or the too imaginative, for

other less corporeal beings that flit about in the dusky hours of night. Thus the ivy acquires a character of mystery and gloom, perhaps even more poetical than that which strikes us when we see its glittering sprays glancing in the clear light of day, or waving in the wind around the grey turrets of the ruin, and suggesting that simile which has been so frequently the poet's theme, of light words and jocund smiles assumed by the broken hearted to conceal the withering of the blighted soul.

It would be useless to proceed farther with this minute examination of objects, to each of which a volume of relative ideas might be appropriated. A few examples are sufficient to prove, that with this class of natural productions, the great majority of minds are the same in their associations. Would it might prove something better than a mockery of the loveliness of nature, thus to examine its component parts, and ask why each is charming ! Far more delightful would be the task of expatiating upon the whole, of roaming at will upon the hills and through the woods, and embracing at one view, in one ecstatic thought, the unspeakable harmony which reigns through the creation. The pine, the oak, and the elm,

may be magnificent in themselves—the willow, the heath, and the ivy, may each present a picture to the imagination; but what are these, considered separately, compared with the ever-varying combination of form and colour, majesty and grace, presented by the forest, or the woodland, the sloping banks of the river, or the leafy dell, where the round and the massive figures are broken by the spiral stem, or the feathery foliage that trembles in the passing gale—where the hues that are most vivid, or most delicate, stand forth in clear contrast from the depths of sombre shade—where every projecting rock and rugged cleft is fringed with a curtain of green tracery, and every glassy stream reflects again, in its stainless mirror, the variety and the magnificence of the surrounding groves? Yet what are words to tell of the perfection of nature, the glories that lie scattered even in our daily path? And what are we, that we should pursue the sordid avocations of life without pausing to admire?

In order that the harmony of sweet sounds may be distinctly perceived and accommodated to the taste, there must be a peculiar formation of the human ear; nor is it possible for

the poetry of any object, even the most beautiful in nature, to be felt or understood without an answering chord in the human heart. There are many rational beings, worthy and estimable in their way, altogether insensible to the unseen or spiritual charm which lies in almost every subject of intellectual contemplation; who gaze upon the ivy-mantled ruin, and behold nothing more than grey walls with a partial covering of green, like the man so aptly described by Wordsworth, when he says—

“The primrose by the water’s brim,
A yellow primrose was to him,
And it was nothing more.”

But there are others, whether happier in this state of being it might not be easy to prove, but certainly more capable of intense and refined enjoyment, who, accustomed to live in a world of thought, and to derive their happiness from remote and impalpable essences of things, rather than from things themselves, cannot look on nature, nor behold any object with which poetical association holds the most distant connection, but immediately a spark in the train of imagination is kindled, and consciousness, memory, and anticipation,

heap fuel on the living fire, which glows through the expansive soul.

It is, still to speak figuratively, by the light of this fire, that they see what is imperceptible to other eyes. They can discover types and emblems in all created things; and having received in their own minds deep and indelible impressions of beauty and harmony, majesty and awe, can recur to those impressions through the channels which external things afford, and draw from thence a never-failing supply of the purest poetical enjoyment.

THE POETRY OF ANIMALS.

WHILE flowers, and trees, and plants in general, afford an immense fund of interest to the contemplative beholder, the animal kingdom, yet scarcely touched upon in these pages, is perhaps equally fertile in poetical associations. From the reflections of the melancholy Jacques upon the wounded deer, down to the pretty nursery fable of "The Babes in the Wood," the same natural desire to associate with our own the habits and feelings of the more sensitive and amiable of the inferior animals is observable, as well in the productions of the sublimest, as the simplest poet.

Burns' "Address to a Mouse," proves to us with how much genuine pathos a familiar and ordinary subject may be invested. No mind

which had never bathed in the fountain of poetry itself—whose remotest attributes had not been imbued with this ethereal principle as with a living fire, could have ventured upon such a theme. In common hands, a moral drawn from a mouse, and clothed in the language of verse, would have been little better than a burlesque, or a baby's song at best; but in these beautiful and touching lines, so perfect is the adaptation of the language to the subject—so evident, without ostentation, the deep feeling of the bard himself, that the moral flows in with a natural simplicity which cannot fail to charm the most fastidious reader.

The lines in which Cowper describes himself as a “stricken deer,” are also affecting in the extreme; but as my object is not to quote instances, but to examine why certain things are pre-eminently poetical, we will proceed to the consideration of a few individual subjects; first premising, that animals obtain the character of being so in a *greater* degree in proportion as we imagine them to possess such qualities as are most elevated or refined in ourselves, and in a *less* degree as we become familiarized with their bodily functions: be-

cause the majority of our ideas in connection with them must then be of a gross and material character, just as we may speak in poetry, of the "wild boar of the wilderness," while the tame hog of the sty is a thing wholly forbidden.

The elephant is allowed to be the most sagacious of the brute creation; but his sagacity is celebrated chiefly in anecdotes of trick and cunning, which qualities being the very reverse of what is elevated or noble in human nature, he possesses, in spite of his curious formation and majestic power, little claim to poetical interest.

The dog very properly stands next in the scale of intellect; and so far as faithful attachment is a rare and beautiful trait in the character both of man and brute, the dog may be said to be poetical; but we are too familiar with this animal to regard him with the reverence which his good qualities might seem to demand. We feed him on crusts and garbage; or we see him hungered until he becomes greedy, neglected until he becomes servile, and spurned until he threatens a vengeance which he dares not execute.

The claims of the horse to the general ad-

miration of mankind are too well understood to need our notice here, especially as they have already been examined in a former chapter. To the horse belong no associations with ideas of what is gross or mean. His most striking attribute is power; and the ardour with which he enters into the excitement of the chase, or the battle, give him a character so nearly approaching to what is most admired in the human species, that the ancients delighted to represent this noble animal, not as he is, but with distended nostrils, indicating a courage almost more than animal, with eyes animated with mental as well as physical energy, and with the broad intellectual forehead of a man.

The ass is certainly less poetical than picturesque; but still it is poetical in its patient endurance of suffering, in its association with the wandering outcasts from society, whose tents are in the wilderness, and whose "lodging is on the cold ground," in its humble appetites, and in its unrepining submission to the most abject degradation. Let us hope that the patience of the ass arises from its own insensibility, and that its sufferings, though frequent, are attended with little acuteness of sensation; but they are sufferings still, borne with a meek-

ness that looks so much like the Christian virtue, resignation, that in contemplating the hard condition of this degraded animal, the heart is softened with feelings of sorrow and compassion, and we long to rescue it from the yoke of the oppressor.

I have often thought there was something peculiarly affecting in the character of the young ass—something almost saddening to the soul, in its sudden starts of short-lived frolic. In its appearance there is a strange unnatural mixture of infant glee, with a mournful and almost venerable gravity. Its long melancholy ears are in perfect contrast with its innocent and happy face. It seems to have heard, what is seldom heard in extreme youth, the sad forebodings of its latter days; and when it crops the thistle, and sports amongst the briers, it appears to be with the vain hope of carrying the spirit of joy along with it through the after vicissitudes of its hard and bitter lot.

The cow is poetical, not from any quality inherent, or even imagined to be inherent in itself, but from its invariable association with rich pastures and verdant meadows, and as an almost indispensable ornament to pictures of quiet rural scenery. Time was when the cow

was poetical from her association with rosy maidens tripping over the dewy lawn, and village swains tuning the rustic reed; but since the high magnifier of modern investigation has been applied to pastoral subjects, milkmaids have been pronounced to be too homely for the poet's theme; village swains have been detected in fustian garments; and both, with their flocks, and their herds, and with pastoral poetry altogether, have been dismissed from the theatre of intellectual entertainment.

Nothing, however, that has yet been effected by the various changes to which taste is liable, has destroyed the poetical character of the deer. Our associations with the deer are far removed from every thing gross or familiar; we think of it only as a free denizen of the woods, swift in its movements, graceful in its elastic step, delicate in all its perceptions, and tremblingly alive to the dangers which threaten it on every hand. We imagine it retiring from the broad clear light of day, into the seclusion of the mountain glen; stooping in silence and solitude to drink of the pure waters in their bubbling and melodious flow; gazing on through the rocky defile, or in amongst the weedy hollows on the banks of the stream, with its

clear calm eye, that looks too full of love and tenderness to be betrayed, yet ever watchful from an instinctive sense of the multiplied calamities which assail the innocent and helpless; listening to the slightest sound of earth or air, the rustling of the spray that springs back from the foot of the fairy songster, or the fall of the leaf that flickers from bough to bough; and then—as the zephyr swells, and the gathering breeze comes like a voice through the leafy depths of the forest—bounding over the mossy turf, and away along the sides of the mountain—away to join the browsing herd, and give them intelligence of an approaching, but unseen foe. Or, when the chase is ended, and the wounded deer returns to pant away its parting breath in the same glen where it gambolled upon the dewy grass, a careless and sportive fawn, he comes back with weary foot and bleeding bosom, to slake his burning thirst in the same fountain where so often he has bathed his vigorous and elastic limbs. The woods are still peaceful, the birds sing on regardless of his groans, the stream receives the life-blood from his wound, his brethren of the faithless herd again are browsing on the distant hills,

and alone in his mortal agony he weeps and dies.

But of all the animal creation, birds have ever been the poet's favourite theme. In the beauty of their form and plumage, in their soaring flight, in their sensitiveness and timidity, and in the lightness and vividness of their movements, there is something to our conceptions so intimately connected with spirituality, that we can readily sympathise with the propensity of the imaginative, to embody, in these gentle and ethereal beings, the souls of their departed friends; and of the superstitious, to regard them as winged messengers laden with the irrevocable decrees of an oracular fate.

It is a curious fact, that in our ideal personifications of angelic forms, we do not perceive that they lose anything of their intellectual or celestial character, by having appended to them the entire wings of a bird. Whether from this association we have learned to consider birds as less material than other animals, or whether, from the aerial flight of birds, the artist and the poet have learned to represent angelic beings as borne along the fields of air

on feathery wings, it is certain that the capacity of flight loses none of its poetical sublimity and grace, by being connected in our notions with the only means of which we have any knowledge.

Birds, in their partiality for the haunts of man, offer a striking appeal to the sensitive and benevolent mind. Why should they cast themselves into the path of the destroyer, or expose their frail habitations to the grasp of his unsparing hand? Is it that they feel some "inly touch of love" for their imperious master, or that they seek from his power what his mercy too often denies? or would they ask in the day of their distress for the sparings of his plenty, and pay him back with the rich melody of their summer songs? Whatever may be the cause, they flock around him, as if the manly privilege of destruction had never been exercised upon their defenceless community. Yet mark how well they know the nature of creation's lord. They tremble at his coming, they flutter in his grasp, they look askance upon him from the bough, they regard him with perpetual suspicion, and above all, some of their species will forsake their beloved and carefully-constructed

habitations, if he has but profaned them with his touch. It can be no want of parental affection which drives them to this unnatural alternative, for how diligently have they toiled, with what exquisite ingenuity have they constructed their children's home, how faithfully have they watched, how patiently have they waited for the fulfilment of their hopes ! Yet in one fatal moment the silken coid that strung together their secret joys is broken. Another spring may renew their labours and their loves, but they know it not. Their all was centred in that narrow point, and to them the hopes and the labours of a whole life are lost. The delicacy of perception which enables them to detect the slightest intrusion upon the sacred mysteries of their nest, gives them a character of acuteness and sensibility far beyond that of other animals ; and it is a wonderful and mysterious instinct which makes them resign all they have loved and cherished, even when no change is perceptible to other eyes, and when it is certain that no injury has been sustained. It is a refinement upon feeling, which strikes the imagination with a strong resemblance to some of those mal-occurrences in human life, which divert the inner channel of the thoughts

and affections, without the superficial observer being aware of any change—those lamentable encroachments upon the sacredness of domestic confidence, which by a word—a look—a touch, may at once destroy the blessedness of that union, which is nothing better than a degrading bond after the spell of its secret charm is broken.

The nightingale, whose charmed lays have a twofold glory in their native melody, and in the poet's song, claims unquestionably the first place in our consideration; though I own I am much disposed to think that this bird owes half its celebrity to the circumstance of its singing in the night, when the visionary, wrapped in the mantle of deep thought, wanders forth to gaze upon the stars, and to court the refreshment of silence and solitude. It is then that the voice of the nightingale thrills upon his ear, and he feels that a kindred spirit is awake, perhaps like him to sweet remembrances, to sorrows too deep for tears, and joys for which music alone can find a voice. He listens, and the ever-varying melody rises and falls upon the wandering wind—he pines for some spiritual communion with this unseen being—he longs to ask why sleep is banished

from a breast so tuned to harmony—joy, and joy alone it cannot be, which inspires that solitary lay; no, there are tones of tenderness too much like grief, and is not grief the bond of fellowship by which impassioned souls are held together? Thus the nightingale pours upon the heart of the poet, strains which thrill with those sensations that have given pathos to his muse, and he pays her back by celebrating her midnight minstrelsy in song.

The skylark is of all the feathered tribe most invariably associated with ideas of rapturous, pure, and elevated enjoyment; such as we ourselves had glimpses of in early life, when the animal excitement of childhood, mingling with the first bright dawnings of reason, lifted us high into the regions of thought, and taught us to spurn at the harsh discipline of real life. From flights such as these we have so often fallen prone upon the earth, that they have ceased to tempt our full-fledged powers, and even if the brilliancy of thought remained to lure us on, the animal stimulus would be wanting, and we should be conscious of our utter inability on the first attempt to soar again. But the memory of this ecstatic feeling still remains, and when we think of the aspira-

tions of purified and happy spirits, we compare them to the upward flight of the lark, or to the boundings of that innocent joy which we ourselves have felt, but feel no more. And then there is the glad voice of the lark, that spring of perpetual freshness, pouring forth its untiring and inexhaustible melody,

“ Like an unbodied joy whose race is just begun.”

Who ever listened to this voice on a clear spring morning, when nature was first rising from her wintry bed, when the furze was in bloom, and the lambs at play, and the primrose and the violet scented the delicious south wind that came with the glad tidings of renovated life—who ever listened to the song of the lark on such a morning, while the dew was upon the grass, and the sun was smiling through a cloudless sky, without feeling that the spirit of joy was still alive within, around, and above him, and that those wild and happy strains, floating in softened melody upon the scented air, were the outpourings of a gratitude too rapturous for words?

Nor is it the vocal power of birds which gives us the highest idea of their intellectual capacity. Their periodical visitations of par-

ticular regions of the globe, and the punctuality with which they go forth on their mysterious passage at particular seasons of the year, form perhaps the most wonderful propensity in their nature. It is true that instinct is the spring of their actions, and it is possible that they are themselves unconscious of any motive or reason for the important change which instinct induces them to make; but in speaking of the poetry of birds, I wish to be understood to refer to the *ideas* which their habits naturally excite, not to the facts which they elicit. We know that birds are by no means distinguished above other animals by their intellectual capacity, but so wonderful, so far beyond our comprehension, is the instinct exhibited in their transient lives, that instead of having always in mind the providential scheme which provides for the wants and wishes even of the meanest insect, we are apt to indulge our imaginations by attaching to the winged wanderers of the air, vague yet poetical ideas of their own mental endowments, and half believe them to be actuated by a delicacy of sense and feeling, in many cases superior to our own. Whether this belief, with which the minds of children are so strongly imbued, and which lingers

about us long after we have become acquainted with its fallacy, be any bar to the progress of philosophical knowledge, I am not prepared to say; but certainly it is the very essence of poetical feeling; and for one visionary who would scruple to kill a bird for dissection because it had been the companion of his woodland walks, there will remain to be a thousand practical men who would care little what strains had issued from that throat, if they could but ascertain how the throat itself was constructed. It is precisely the same principle which inspires us with the sublimest ideas of the majesty of the universe, by embodying in the stars, the mountains, the ocean, or the pealing thunder, some unseen, but powerful intelligence, that offers for our enjoyment a never-ending companionship in the woods and wilds, through an ideal personification of every thing sweet and fair. It is this principle which makes us hail the periodical return of certain birds, as if they had been thinking of us, and of our fields and gardens, in that far distant land, of which they tell no tidings; and, taking into consideration the changes of the seasons, had consulted upon the best means of escaping the dangers of the threatening storm: as if they

had spread their feeble wings to bear them over the wide waste of inhospitable waters from the energy of their own hearts, and had come back to us from their own unchangeable and fervent love.

If it be poetry to gaze upon the mighty ocean with that strange, deep wonder with which we regard the manifestations of a mysterious, but concentrated and individual power—to feel that *he* stretches his unfathomable expanse from pole to pole—that *he* ruffles his foaming mane and rushes bellowing upon the circling shore—or that *he* lies slumbering in his silent glory, beneath the blaze of our meridian sun, and through the still midnight of the island gardens that gem the South Pacific ; it is not less in unison with poetic feeling, nor less productive of ecstatic thought, to personify the trees, and the flowers, and the rippling streams, and to welcome with gratitude the fairy forms and glad voices that come to tell us of returning spring.

Who that has tasted the delights of poetry, would be deprived of this power of the imagination to people the air and animate the whole creation ? Let the critic smile—let the tradesman count his pence, and reckon up how little

imagination has ever added to his store—let the modern philosopher examine the leaf, and the flower, and the bird's wing, and pronounce them equally material and devoid of mind—let the good man say that poetry is a vain pursuit, and that these things are not worthy of our regard ; I maintain that these notions, visionary as they are, tend to innocent enjoyment, and that innocent enjoyment is not a vain pursuit, because it may, and ought to inspire us with love and gratitude towards Him who has not only given us a glorious creation to enjoy, but faculties to enjoy it with, and imagination to make the most of it.

With the swallow we associate the ever-cheering idea of returning summer. We watch for its coming, and rejoice to hear the merry twittering voice, that seems to tell of a life of innocent and careless glee—an existence unruffled by a storm. As the summer advances, and we seek shelter from the noon-day heat in the deep shade of the leafy boughs that wave around the margin of the glassy stream, it is here that the swallow is not unfrequently our sole companion ; and ever as we call to remembrance its swift yet graceful flight, we picture it darting from the pendant branches of the willow,

stooping to cool its arrowy wing upon the surface of the glancing waters, and then away, swifter than thought, into mid air, to sport one moment with aerial beings. Again it sweeps in silence past our feet, over the spiral reeds, around, above us, gliding through the shadows, and flickering through the sunshine ; but never resting, and yet never weary ; for the spirit that animates its bounding bosom, and stretches forth its giddy wing, is one that knows no sleep until light has vanished from the world, no sadness until the sweets of summer are exhausted. And then arises that vague mysterious longing for a milder sphere—that irrepressible energy to do and dare what to mere reason would appear impracticable ; and forth it launches with its faithful companions, true to the appointed time, upon the boundless ocean of infinitude, trusting to it knows not what, yet trusting still.

With the cuckoo, our associations are in some respects the same as with the swallow, except that we are in the habit of regarding it simply as a voice ; and what a voice ! How calm, and clear, and rich ! How full of all that can be told of the endless profusion of summer's charms !—of the hawthorn, in its

scented bloom, of the blossoms of the apple, and the silvery waving of the fresh green corn, of the cowslip in the meadow, and the wild rose by the woodland path; and last, but not least in its poetical beauty, of the springing up of the meek-eyed daisy, to welcome the foot of the traveller, upon the soft and grassy turf.

Above all other birds, the dove is most intimately and familiarly associated in our minds with ideas of the quiet seclusion of rural life, and the enjoyment of peace and love. This simple bird, by no means remarkable for its sagacity, so soft in its colouring, and graceful in its form, that we cannot behold it without being conscious of its perfect loveliness, is in some instances endowed with an extraordinary instinct, which adds greatly to its poetical interest. That species called the carrier pigeon, has often been celebrated for the faithfulness with which it pursues its mysterious way, but never more beautifully than in the following lines by Moore.

“ The bird let loose in eastern skies,
When hastening fondly home,
Ne’er stoops to earth her wing, or flies
Where idler wanderers roam ;

But high she shoots through air and light,
Above all low delay,
Where nothing earthly bounds her flight,
Or shadow dims her way.

So grant me, God, from every stain
Of sinful passion free,
Aloft through virtue's purer air,
To steer my flight to thee !

No sin to cloud, no lure to stay
My soul, as home she springs,
Thy sunshine on her joyful way,
Thy freedom on her wings."

But neither the wonderful instinct of this undeviating messenger, nor even the classical association of the two white doves with the queen of love and beauty, are more powerful in awakening poetical ideas than the simple cooing of our own wood pigeon, heard sometimes in the silent solemnity of summer's noon, when there is no other sound but the hum of the wandering bee, as he comes laden and rejoicing home, when the sun is alone in the heavens, and the cattle are sleeping in the shade, and not a single breath of air is whispering through the boughs, and the deep dark shadows of the elm and the sycamore lie motionless upon the earth—or in the cool evening, when the shadows, less distinct, are lengthened out upon the lawn,

and the golden west is tinging here and there the bright green foliage with a brighter hue, when the shepherd is numbering his flock, and the labourer is returning to his rest, it is then that the soft sweet cooing of the dove, bursting forth as it were from the pure fount of love and joy within its breast, sounds like the lullaby of nature, and diffuses over the mind that holy calm which belongs to our best and happiest feelings.

From the timid moor cock, the "whirring partridge," and the shy water fowl that scarcely dares to plume its beauteous wing in the moonlight of our autumnal evening, when the floods are high, and the wind rushes whispering through the long sere grass, down to the russet wren that looks so gravely conscious of the proprieties of life, there is scarcely one class of the feathered tribe to which imagination does not readily and naturally assign an intellectual, or rather a moral character, associating it with feelings and capabilities, of which the little flutterer is (perhaps happily for itself) unconscious. The peacock is a striking illustration of this fact. The beauty of his plumage is in all probability lost upon him, yet because it consists of that rich and gaudy

colouring, which is consistent with our notions of what vanity delights in, and because the lengthened garniture of his tail requires that for convenience and repose he should often place himself in an elevated situation, he has obtained a character which there is little in his real nature to justify, and as an emblem of pride, is placed by the side of Juno in her regal dignity. This tendency of the mind to throw over sensible objects a colouring of its own, is also proved by the character which mankind have bestowed upon the robin redbreast, in reality a jealous, quarrelsome, and unamiable bird; yet such is the unobtrusive and meek beauty of its little form, the touching pathos of its "still small voice," and the appeals it seems ever to be making to the kindness and protection of man, that the poet perpetually speaks of the robin with tenderness and love, and even the rude ravager of the woods spares a breast so lovely, and so full of simple melody.

Birds, as well as other animals, owe much of their poetical interest to the fabulous part of their history; thus the pelican is said to feed her young with the life-blood flowing from her own bosom, and this unnatural act of maternal affection is quoted by the poet as a favourite

simile for self-devotion under various forms. Of the swan it is said and sung, that in dying she breathes forth a strain of plaintive song; but even without this poetical fable, the swan is associated with so much that is graceful and lovely, that we cannot think of this majestic queen of the water, sailing forth like a snow-white galley on the silver tide, without losing ourselves in a romantic dream of lakes and rivers, and that sylvan scenery which the swan is known to frequent.

We have yet given our attention only to those birds whose nature and habits are productive of pleasing associations. There are others no less poetical, whose home is in the desert or the mountain, whose life is in the storm or on the field of carnage; and it is to these especially that fabulous history has given importance and celebrity.

For its mysterious and gloomy character, the owl is particularly distinguished; and such is the grave aspect of its countenance, so nearly resembling the human face in the traits which are considered as indicative of sagacity and earnest thought, that the ancients dignified this bird by making it the emblem of wisdom, though there seems to be little in its real na-

ture to merit such exaltation. From the extreme timidity of the owl, and its habitual concealment from the light of day, it is difficult to become familiar with its character. We see it sailing forth on expanded wings in the grey twilight of the evening, when other birds have retired to their nightly rest; or we behold it in the distance a misty speck, half light, half shadow, just visible in the same proportion, and with the same obscurity of outline and colour, as in our infancy we fancied that spiritual beings from another world made themselves perceptible in this. Besides which, the voice of the owl, as it comes shrieking on the midnight blast, and its mysterious breathings, half sighs, half whispers, heard amongst the ivy wreaths of the ruin, all tend to give to this bird a character of sadness, solemnity and awe.

The raven, strikingly sagacious and venerable in its appearance, is still believed by the superstitious to be a bird of ill omen; and much as we may be disposed to despise such prognostications as the flight, or the cry of different birds, there is something in the habits, but especially in the voice of the raven, which gives it a strange and almost fearful character.

It seems to hold no communion with the joyous spirits, to have no association with the happy scenes of earth; but leads a lengthened and unsocial life amongst the gloomy shades of the venerable forest, in the deep recesses of the pathless mountain, or on the rocky summit of the beetling crag that overlooks the ocean's blue abyss; and when it goes forth, with its sable pinions spread like the wings of a dark angel upon the wind, its hoarse and hollow croak echoes from rock to rock, as if telling, in those dreary and appalling tones, of the fleshly feast to which it is hastening, of the death-pangs of the mountain deer, of the cry of the perishing kid, and of the bones of the shipwrecked seaman whitening in the surge.

To the eagle mankind have agreed in assigning a sort of regal character, from the majesty of his bearing, and the proud pre-eminence he maintains amongst the feathered tribe; from the sublimity of his chosen home, far above the haunts of man and meaner animals, from the self-seclusion in which he holds himself apart from the general association of living and familiar things, and from the beauty and splendour of his sagacious eye, which shrinks not from the dazzling glare of the sun.

itself. Innumerable are the fables founded upon the peculiar habits of this bird, all tending to exalt him in the scale of moral and intellectual importance; but to the distinction conferred upon him by the ancients when they raised him to a companionship with Jove, is mainly to be attributed the poetical interest with which his character is universally invested.

There are many birds whose peculiar haunts and habits render them no less useful to the painter than the poet, by adding to the pictorial effect of his landscape. In the sheet of crystal water which skirts the nobleman's domain, and widens in front of his castellated halls, we see the stately swan; on the shady margin of the quiet stream, embosomed in a copsewood forest, the shy water hen; the jackdaw on the old grey steeple of the village church; and a company of rooks winging their social way, wherever the scenery is of a peaceful, cultivated or rural character. By these means our inimitable Turner delights to give his pictures their highly poetical character. The heron is one of his favourite birds, and when it stands motionless and solitary upon a broken fragment of dark rock, looking down into the clear deep,

water, with that imperturbable aspect of never-ending melancholy which marks it out as a fit accompaniment of wild and secluded scenery, we feel almost as if the genius of the place were personified before us, and silent, and lonely, and unfrequented as these wilds may be, that there is at least one spirit which finds companionship in their solitude.

But above all other birds, the seagull, as it diversifies the otherwise monotonous aspect of the ocean, is an essential accompaniment to every representation of a sea view. Had the colour of this bird been red or yellow, or almost any other than what it is, it would have broken the harmony of the picture; but its breast is of the foam of the ocean waves, and the misty hue of its darker plumage is like the blending of the vapoury clouds with the cold blue of the deep sea below. Not only in its colouring, but in the wild gracefulness of its movements, in its shrill cry, in its swift and circling flight, and in the reckless freedom with which it sails above the drear abyss, its dark shadow reflected in the hollow of the concave waters, and its white plumage flashing like a gleam of light, or like the ocean spray, from rock to rock, it assimilates so entirely with the whole character

of the scene, that we look upon it as a living atom separated from the troubled and chaotic elements, a personification of the spirit of the storm, a combination of its foam and its darkness, its light and its depth, its swiftness and its profound solemnity.

Inferior to birds in their pictorial beauty, though scarcely less conducive to poetical interest, are the various tribes of insects that people the earth and animate the air ; but before turning our attention to these, it may be well to think for a moment in what manner the poet's imagination is affected by fishes and reptiles. Of the poetry of fishes little can be said. Two kinds only occur to me as being familiar in the language of poetry, and conducive to its figurative charm—the flying fish and the dolphin. The former, in its transient and feeble flight, has been made the subject of some beautiful lines by Moore ; and because of the perpetual dangers which await it from innumerable enemies, both in sea and air, it is often adopted as a simile for the helpless and persecuted children of earth ; while the dolphin, from the beauty of its form, and the gorgeous colours which are said to be produced by its last agonies, is celebrated in the poet's lay as an emblem of the glory which

shines most conspicuously in the hour of death.

“———— parting day
Dies like the dolphin, whom each pang imbues
With a new colour, as it gasps away ·
The last still loveliest, till,—’tis gone—and all is gray !”

BYRON.

In fearful pre-eminence amongst those animals commonly considered repulsive and degraded, is the serpent, whose history is unavoidably associated with the introduction of sin and sorrow into the world. Whether from this association, or from an instinctive horror of its “venomous tooth,” it is certain that the serpent is more generally dreaded, and more loathed, even by those who do not fear it, than any other living thing ; and yet how beautiful is its sagacious eye, how rich and splendid its colouring, how delicate the tracery of network thrown all over its glossy scales, how graceful and easy its meandering movements, as it winds itself in amongst the rustling grass, how much like one of the fairest objects in nature, a clear blue river wandering through a distant valley ! Yet all these claims to beauty, which the serpent unquestionably possesses, entitle it the more to the contempt and abhorrence of man-

kind, by obtaining for it the character of insinuating guile, which the allurements it is recorded to have practised upon our first mother seem fully to confirm.

The toad, save for the "precious jewel in his head," can scarcely be called poetical, though not unfrequently found in verse as a striking similitude for the extreme of ugliness, as well as for a despicable proneness to grovel in what is earthly and most abhorrent to our finer feelings, from its frequenting low, damp, unwholesome places, the banks of stagnant pools, or the nettles and long grass that wave over the gloomy and untrodden ground where the dead lie sleeping in their silent rest.

The snail has certainly no strong claims to poetical merit; yet we often find it serving the purpose of simile and illustration, from its tardy movements, and the faculty it has of carrying about its home, into which it shrinks on the first touch of the enemy. And even the lowly worm has some title to the poet's regard, because of its utter degradation, and the circumstance of its being, of all living things, most liable to injury, at the same time that it is one of the least capable of resistance or revenge.

Passing slightly over the multitudinous family of insects, we leave the beetle to his evening flight—the grasshopper, whose merry chirp enlivens the wayside traveller—the bee, perhaps the most poetical of any, from his opposite qualities of collecting honey and diffusing poison—the locust, whose plagues are often commemorated—the hornet, to whose stings Milton describes Samson as comparing the accumulated agony of his own restless thoughts—the glow-worm, whose feeble light is like a fairy star, beaming upward from a world upon which all other stars look down—and the canker-worm, whose fatal ravages destroy the bloom of youth, and render void the prodigality of summer—passing over all these and many more, in which we recognize the familiar companions of the poet, we turn our attention to the butterfly and the moth, as being most associated with refined and agreeable ideas.

The butterfly is like a spiritual attendant upon the poet's path, whether he dreams of it as an emblem of the soul, fluttering around the fair form of Psyche, or beholds it in no less beautiful reality, sporting from flower to flower, and

teaching him the highest intellectual lesson—to gather sweets from all.

We are apt in our childhood to delight in the legendary tales of fairy people inhabiting the groves, the gardens, or the fields, and regard with an interest almost superstitious, that mysterious circle of dark green verdure that remains from year to year marking the enchanted spot, where once they were believed to hold their midnight revels. Butterflies, in their exquisite colouring, their airy movements, and ephemeral lives, exhibit to the imaginative beholder no slight resemblance to these ideal beings, as they glide through the scented atmosphere of the parterre, nestle in the velvet leaves of the rose, or touch without soiling the snowy bosom of the lily.

The butterfly is also strikingly emblematical of that delicacy which shrinks from communion with all that is rude or base. Touch but its gorgeous wings, and their beauty falls away—immure the woodland wanderer in captivity, and it pines and dies—let the breath of the storm pass over it, and in an instant it perishes.

The moth is less splendidly beautiful than the butterfly. It has a graver character, and

seeks neither the sunshine nor the flowers of summer ; yet it is liable to be destroyed by the same degree of violence. Supported by the same slight thread of life, and scarcely perceptible amongst the evening shadows, except as an animated speck of moving mist, it yet possesses one striking characteristic, of which the poet fails not to avail himself—a tendency to seek the light, even when that light must prove fatal to its own existence. How many poetical ideas has this simple tendency excited ! But enough on this fertile theme. The reader will doubtless be better pleased to examine the subject farther for himself, than to have additional instances of the poetry of animals placed before his view.

It is sufficient to add, in continuation of this subject, that without allowing ourselves time and opportunity to study the nature and habits of animals, we can never really *feel* that they constitute an important part of the world which we inhabit. We may read of them in books, and even be able to class them according to their names and the genera to which they belong, but they will not enter into our hearts as members of the brotherhood of nature, claim-

ing kindred with ourselves, and entitled to our tenderness and love. Those who have known this fellowship in early life will never lose the remembrance of it to their latest day, but will continue to derive from it refreshment and joy, even as they tread the weary paths that lead through the dark passage of a sordid and troubled existence. The difference between those who study nature for themselves, and those who only read of it in books, is much the same as between those who travel, and those who make themselves acquainted with the situation of different countries upon a map. The mind of the traveller is stored with associations of a moral and intellectual character, which no map can suggest; and he who occasionally resigns his soul to the genuine influence of nature as it is seen and felt in the external world, will lay up a rich store of deep and precious thought, to be referred to for amusement and consolation through the whole of his after life.

Had Pope, our immortal poet, not cultivated this intimate and familiar acquaintance with the nature and habits of animals, he would never have thought them of sufficient impor-

tance to be made instrumental in conveying the following severe, yet just reproof to man.

“ Has God, thou fool ! work'd solely for thy good !
Thy joy, thy pastime, thy attire, thy food !
Who for thy table feeds the wanton fawn,
For him as kindly spreads the flow'ry lawn.
Is it for thee the lark ascends and sings ?
Joy tunes his voice, joy elevates his wings.
Is it for thee the linnet pours his throat ?
Loves of his own, and raptures, swell the note.
The bounding steed you pompously bestride,
Shares with his lord the pleasure and the pride.
Is thine alone the seed that strews the plain ?
The birds of heaven shall vindicate their grain
Thine the full harvest of the golden year ?
Part pays, and justly, the deserving steer.”

THE POETRY OF EVENING

ASCENDING in the scale of poetical interest, the seasons might not improperly occupy the next place in our regard, had they not already been especially the theme of one of our ablest poets. To describe the feelings which the seasons, in their constant revolutions, are calculated to excite, would therefore only be to recapitulate the language and insult the memory of Thomson. There is one circumstance, however, connected with this subject, which demands a moment's attention here. It is the preference for certain seasons of the year evinced by different persons, according to the tone or temperament of their own minds. There are many tests by which human character may be tried. In answering the simple

question, "which is your favourite season?" we often betray more than we are aware of at the time, of the nature of our own feelings and character. It is no stretch of imagination to believe, certainly no misstatement of fact to say, that the young and the innocent (or the good, who resemble both) almost invariably make choice of spring as their favourite season of the year; while the naturally morbid and melancholy, or those who have made themselves so by the misuse of their best faculties, as invariably choose autumn. Why so few make choice of summer is not easy to say, unless the oppressive sense of heat is too powerful in its influence upon the body to allow the mind to receive any deeply pleasurable sensations, or because during the summer there is such a constant springing up of beauty, such an unceasing supply of vigour in the animal and vegetable world, that our ideas of spring are carried on until the commencement of autumn. There are a still smaller number of individuals who venture to say they love the dark days of winter, because, in order to find our greatest enjoyment in this season, we must possess a fund of almost uninterrupted domestic happiness, and few there are who can boast of this inestimable blessing;

few indeed who, when thrown entirely upon the resources which their own hearts, their own homes, or their own families afford, do not sometimes wish to escape, if only to enjoy the refreshment of green fields, free air, and sunny skies.

The good and the happy, the young and the innocent, whose hearts are full of hope, find peculiar gratification in the rich promise of spring, in the growth and perfection of plants, the rejoicing of the animal creation, and the renovated beauty of universal nature. There is within themselves a kind of sympathy, by which they become a part of the harmonious whole, a grateful trust which accords with this promise, a springing up and growth of joyful expectation, which keeps pace with the general progress of the natural world, and echoes back a soul-felt response to the voice which tells of happiness.

How different in all, except their power over the feelings, are the sympathies which are called forth by the contemplation of autumn! The beauty, or rather the bloom of nature, is then passing away, and the gorgeous and splendid hues which not unfrequently adorn the landscape remind us too forcibly of that mournful

hectic which is known to be a fatal precursor of decay. Every thing fades around us like our own hopes; summer with her sprightliness has left us, like the friends of our youth; while winter, cold winter, comes apace; alas! too like the chilling prospect that lies before us in the path of life. Thus imagination multiplies our gloomy associations, and renders autumn the season best beloved by the morbid and cheerless, for very sympathy with its tendency to fade.

He who knew, perhaps better than any other man, the depth and the intensity of the mind's worst malady, tells us that—

“The glance of melancholy is a fearful gift;”

and fearful indeed is that insatiable appropriation to her own gloomy purposes with which melancholy endows her victims. Fearful would it be to read and sinful to write, how melancholy can distort the fairest picture, extract bitterness from all things sweet and lovely, darkness from light, and anguish—unmitigable anguish—from what was beneficently intended to beautify and to bless.

Each day also has its associations, so nearly resembling those of the seasons, that it will not

be necessary to examine in their separate characters the natural divisions of morning, noon, evening, and night. But evening, as being universally allowed to be highly poetical, may justly claim a large share of our attention.

“ Now came still evening on, and twilight grey
Had in her sober livery all things clad.”

These words occur immediately to every poetical mind on the first consideration of this solemn and lovely hour. Indeed they occur so familiarly, that if it were possible they could lose their charm, it would already have been destroyed by frequency of repetition. But these two lines contain within themselves a volume of poetic feeling, that will live imperishable and unimpaired, so long as the human mind shall retain its highest and purest conceptions of the nature of real poetry. The very words have a resemblance to the general lull of nature, gently sinking into the silence of night—“ Now came still evening on;” “ twilight grey” presents us with more than a picture—with a feeling—a distinct perception of thin shadows, and white mists gradually blending together; and the last line completely embodies in a few simple words, our ideas of the all-pervading

influence of evening, with its universally tranquillizing, solemn and mysterious power.

The mystery of twilight is not the least charm it possesses to an imaginative and poetic mind. From the earliest records of intelligent beings, we learn that mystery has ever been inconceivably powerful in its influence upon the human mind. All false religions have been built upon this foundation, and even the true has its mysteries, for which we reverence it the more. Those subjects which excite the deepest veneration and awe, strike us with an indefinite sense of something which we do not—which we cannot, understand; and the throne of the monarch, by being veiled from vulgar eyes, is thus invested with a mystery to which it is greatly indebted for its support. Were all mankind clearly convinced of the inestimable value of true virtue, were they all noble, generous, and devoted, and were all sovereigns immaculate, they might then go forth amongst their people, defended only by their own dignity, supported only by the affection and esteem of their subjects. But since we have learned in these degenerate times that kings are but men, and since there are base natures abroad, ever ready to lay hold of and expose

the slightest proof of fallibility in their superiors, it is highly necessary to the maintenance of regal majesty, that the sovereign should be raised above the cognizance of vulgar penetration; that properly initiated members should constitute the court, within whose penetralia the ignorant and common herd are not permitted to intrude; and that in order to give the mandate which issues from the throne, the awful solemnity of an oracle, its irrevocable veto should be uttered unseen.

It next becomes our business to inquire how mystery possesses this power to fascinate the strongest mind, and to lead captive the most tumultuous passions.

Along with mystery, there is invariably some degree of excitement; and excitement, if we may judge by the general conduct and pursuits of mankind, is, when not extended so as to create a feeling of pain, a universally delightful sensation. In speaking of a love of excitement, those who look gloomily upon human nature, are apt to describe it as a defect; but would it not be more philosophical, as well as more consistent with a grateful disposition, to regard this principle as having been implanted in our nature to stimulate us to exertion, and

to render the various occupations of life a succession of pleasing duties, rather than of irksome toils?

That excitement is uniformly the accompaniment of mystery, is owing to this cause: mystery is not the subject of any one particular train of ideas, nor can it exclusively occupy the reasoning powers, for want of something tangible to lay hold of; but while the senses or the feelings are strongly affected by that which is new, or strange, or fearful, or magnificent, it opens a field in which all the faculties of the mind, set at liberty from physical restraint, may rush forth to expatiate or combat, without any one gaining the ascendancy. Sometimes fear for a moment takes the lead, but the want of sufficient proof or fact to establish any definite cause of alarm, encourages hope; love peoples the unfathomable void with creatures of its own formation; or hate, revenge, and malice wreak their fury upon they know not what; while imagination, the sovereign queen of mystery, reigns supreme and undisturbed over her own ærial realm. Thus does mystery afford illimitable scope for the perpetual activity and play of all the thoughts or passions of which we are capable. By allowing liberty of

operation to all, the violence of each is neutralized, and hence the power of mystery over the mind of man.

It may be argued, that mystery has often been the means of exciting the most violent passions, such as fear or superstition. Mystery has unquestionably been made by artful men the means of exciting the curiosity, and arresting the attention of their deluded followers; and thus rendering them more willing and servile recipients of false views, or base desires. But in order that either fear or superstition should be excited to any violent degree, it must have been necessary to dissolve the veil of mystery, and reveal distinctly some palpable object of dread, or subject of mistaken worship.

But to return from this digression to the more pleasing consideration of that delightful hour of day, which brings to every creature the most powerful and indissoluble associations with what it loves best.

“Home to the weary, to the hungry cheer,
To the young bird its mother’s brooding wings.”

Before the mystery of evening, if not in a higher degree, we are charmed with its repose. The stillness that gradually steals over the

creation extends to our own hearts. Passion is lulled, and if we are not, we long to be at rest.

“I will return at the close of day,” says the wanderer as he goes forth; and in the evening we begin to listen for his welcome, though weary step. “It is but another day of toil,” says the labourer as he brushes away the morning dew, “in the evening I shall rest again;” and already his children are watching at the cottage door, and his wife is preparing his evening meal. All day the rebellious child has resisted the chastisements of love; but in the evening his soul is subdued, and he weeps upon his mother’s bosom. We can appease the yearnings of the heart, and drive away reflection—nay, we can live without sympathy, until evening steals around our path, and tells us with a voice which makes itself be heard, that we are alone. In the freshness of morning, and through all the stirring occupations of busy noon, man can forget his Maker; but in the solemn evening hour he feels that he is standing in the presence of his God. In the day-time we move on with the noisy multitude, in their quest of sordid gain, or we wear without weariness or complaint the gilded chains which

bind down the soul, or we struggle against the tide of time and circumstance, battling with straws, and spending our strength in fruitless warfare ; but in the evening we long to find a path where the flowers are not trampled down by many feet, to burst the degrading bonds of custom, and to think and feel more like immortal beings ; we see the small importance of those contested points about which so many parties are at war, and we become willing to glide on with the stream, without fretting ourselves about every weed or feather on its surface ; esteeming peace of mind and goodwill towards men far before the defence of any particular set of opinions, or even the establishment of our own.

Evening is the time for remembrance ; for the powers of the mind having been all day in exercise, still retain their activity, and being no longer engaged in necessary or worldly pursuits, branch out into innumerable associations, from things present and visible, to those which are unseen and remote, and which but for such associations might have been forgotten. The evening melody of the birds, stealing gently upon the humid air, and heard more distinctly than their noon-day song, calls up the image of

some friend with whom we have listened to that sound ; nor can we pursue our wonted evening walk without being reminded by the very path, the trees, the flowers, and even the atmosphere, of that familiar interchange of thought and feeling, never enjoyed in such perfection as at the close of day. But, above all other ideas connected with this hour, we love the *repose* of evening. Every living creature is then sinking to rest, darkness is stealing around us like a misty curtain, a dreamy languor subdues our harsher feelings, and makes way for the flow of all that is tender, affectionate, or refined. It is scarcely possible to muse upon this subject without thinking of the return of the wanderer, the completion of labour, the folding of the weary wing, the closing of innocent eyes in peaceful slumber, the vesper hymn, and the prayer or thanksgiving with which every day should be closed.

How is it, that when there is so much even in external nature to remind ungrateful man of his duty, he should be backward in offering that tribute which is due to the Author of all his blessings ? Is it so hard a thing to be thankful for the bountiful sun, when we see what a train of glory goes along with his departing

light? For the gentle and refreshing dews which come with timely nourishment to the dry and drooping plants? For those very plants, and their unspeakable utility and beauty? For all that the eye beholds of loveliness or magnificence, or that the ear distinguishes of harmony? But above all, for that unwearied sense of enjoyment with which it is possible for man to walk through the creation, rendering thanks to his Creator at every step.

Far be it from the writer of these pages to advocate the vain philosophy of past ages—the vague notion long since discarded from the rational world, that the contemplation of the grandeur, beauty, or even perfection of the universe, is sufficient of itself to lead the heart to God. I speak of such contemplation as being the natural and suitable exercise of an immortal mind, and of the glories of creation as corroborating evidence that a gracious will has designed the mystery of our being, and that a powerful hand continues to uphold the world which we inhabit. I speak of the soothing calm of evening, not with the puerile notion that mere sentimental musing is conducive to the vitality of the true spirit of Christianity—that spirit which is compelled to en-

gage in active warfare with the world, and sometimes to maintain its stand amidst all that is repulsive to the poetic mind ; but I speak of the evening hour as a season of repose and wholesome refreshment to this spirit, and of all other enjoyments derived from the admiration of nature as lawful, natural, and highly conducive to the feeling of thankfulness which unfailingly pervades the soul of the true Christian.

THE POETRY OF THE MOON.

To write a chapter on the moon, appears, at first sight, a task no less presumptuous in itself, than inevitably fruitless in its consequences—fruitless as regards that kind of interest which on behalf of the queen of night has been called forth and sanctified by the highest powers of genius, as well as abused and profaned by the lowest. To apostrophise the moon, even in the most ecstatic lays, would, in the present day, be little less absurd than to attempt

“ To gild refined gold, to paint the lily,
 To throw a perfume o’er the violet,
 To smoothe the ice, or add another hue
 Unto the rainbow, or with lanthorn light
 To seek the beauteous eye of Heaven to garnish.”

Yet in order to prove that the moon is of all natural and sensible objects, pre-eminently poe-

tical, no other facts need be adduced than these ; that all the effusions of disordered fancy which have been offered at her shrine, since first the world began, have not deprived the queen of night of one iota of her regal dignity ; not all the abortive efforts of deceptive art, (and not a few have presented a mockery of her inimitable beauty,) have, in the slightest degree impaired the charm of her loveliness ; not all the allusions of sickly sentiment, or vulgar affectation, have sullied her purity ; nor have all the scenes of degradation, fraud, or cruelty, which her mysterious light has illuminated, been able, even in these clear-sighted and practical times, to render less solemn and imposing, that soul-pervading influence, with which the moon is still capable of inspiring those who have not entirely subdued or sacrificed the tender, generous, or sublime emotions of their nature.

In power, and majesty, and glory, the sun unquestionably claims our regard before all other objects of creation. But the sun is less poetical than the moon, because his attributes are less exclusively connected with our mental perceptions. By combining the idea of heat with that of light, our associations become

more sensitive and corporeal, and consequently less refined. The light of the sun is also too clear, and too generally pervading in its nature, to be so poetical as that of the moon. It leaves too little for the imagination. All is revealed to the eye; and myriads of different objects being thus made distinctly visible, the attention wants that focus of concentration which gives intensity and vividness to all our impressions.

“But the stars,” some may ask, “are they not sufficiently distant and magnificent for sublimity—mild enough for purity—beautiful enough for love?” Yes; but they are too distant—too pure—too cold for human love. They come not near our troubled world, they smile not upon us like the moon. We feel that they are beautiful. We behold and admire. No wonder that the early dwellers upon earth should have been tempted to behold and worship. But one thing is wanting, that charm, whether real or ideal, which connects, or seems to connect, our mental sufferings, wants, and wishes, with some high and unattainable source of intelligence—the charm of sympathy. Thousands of purified and elevated minds have expatiated upon the stars as the most sublime of

all created objects, and so unquestionably they are;* but sublimity is not all that constitutes the essence of poetic feeling. The spirit of poetry dwells not always in the high and distant heavens, but loves to vary its existence by the enjoyment of tender and home-felt delights. Thus we are not satisfied, even in our highest intellectual pursuits, unless we find something to appropriate, and call our own; and thus while we admire the stars as splendid portions of the magnificence of the heavens, we both admire and love the moon, because, still retaining her heavenly character, she approaches nearer to our earth. We cannot look upon the stars without being struck with a sense of their distance, their unattainable height, the immeasurable extent of space that lies between the celestial fields which they traverse with a perpetual harmony of motion, and the low world of petty cares where we lie grovelling. But the moon—the placid moon, is just high enough for sublimity, just near

* Every one disposed to doubt this truth, may find full conviction by reading in Montgomery's *Lectures on Poetry*. a few pages devoted to this subject; perhaps the most poetical effusion that ever flowed from an eloquent pen, inspired by a refined imagination, a highly gifted mind, and a devout spirit.

enough for love. So benign, and bland, and softly beautiful is her ever-beaming countenance, that when personifying, as we always do, the moon, she seems to us rather as purified, than as having been always pure. We feel as if some fellowship with human frailty and suffering had brought her near us, and almost wonder whether her seasons of mysterious darkness are accompanied with that character of high and unimpeachable dignity which attends her seasons of light. Her very beams, when they steal in upon our meditations, seem fraught with tenderness, with charity, and love ; so that we naturally associate them in our own minds, not so much with supernatural perfection, as with that which has been refined and sublimated by a moral process. We call to remembrance the darkest imputation ever cast upon the moon, in those dark times when to be a goddess was by no means to be free from every moral stain ; and then, in fanciful return for all her sweet, and cheering, and familiar light, we sometimes offer a sigh of pity to the vestal Dian, that she should have paid so dearly for having loved but once, and that with so pure a flame, that it disturbed not the dreams of a slumbering shepherd boy.

To prove that the moon is of all visible objects the most poetical, there needs no other evidence than the *number* of poetic lays in which she has been celebrated. The merit of these lays is proof of a totally different nature, and has nothing to do with the case in point; the inspiration being in the moon herself—the virtue of that inspiration in the souls of her votaries. Here however we find additional, and perhaps stronger proof of the same fact; for not only have poets of every age, and every country, found in the queen of night a never-tiring theme; but she has unquestionably the honour of having called forth some of the most memorable, and most brilliant effusions of poetic genius. To quote illustrative passages on this subject would be to fill volumes, and to make selections would be almost impossible, amongst instances so numerous and so fraught with interest; but there is one scene in the Merchant of Venice which deserves particular notice, for the natural and simple manner in which the poet has given us the most perfect idea of an exquisite moonlight night, apparently without effort, and almost without description. It is where the two lovers, escaped from danger and suspicion, first find time and

opportunity for the quiet enjoyment which is best appreciated after imminent risk. In this picture (for it is nothing less) we behold most strikingly the master hand by which the scene is drawn. Here is no babbling 'about silver rays,' 'soft influence,' or 'smiling light;' the passage commences merely with—'The moon shines bright;' and then so perfect is the enjoyment of the lovers, both in each other and in all that surrounds them, that they immediately strike off comparisons between that particular night, and others that have been vividly impressed upon their imaginations, not by observation, but by passages from (perhaps their favourite) authors, where the moon has been called in to aid the representation of some of the most striking scenes. Had the happiness of Lorenzo and Jessica been less absorbing, or had the night been less beautiful, they might have told us how, and upon what objects the moon was then shining. But with them all was complete. They had no comments to make upon the lovely night, which we are left to suppose too exquisite for description; and after amusing themselves and each other with simple, but most beautiful allusions to classic history, they very naturally fall into that playful humour,

which belongs to perfect happiness, and descending from their poetic flights, turn upon each other the sportive badinage, which is more familiar to those who are but "earthly happy." They are then interrupted by the entrance of a messenger; but still, the mind of the poet having been filled to overflowing with his own idea, or rather his own intense feeling of this ecstatic night, he goes on after the first exuberance of fancy has been expended in mere association, to give us some description of the scene; and then follows that passage so highly imaginative and poetical, yet withal so simple, that it seems but to embody in words, the faint dreams that have floated through our own minds a thousand times without finding utterance :

" How sweet the moonlight sleeps upon this bank '
Here will we sit, and let the sounds of music
Creep in our ears ; soft stillness, and the night,
Become the touches of sweet harmony.
Sit, Jessica. Look how the floor of Heaven
Is thick inlay'd with pannes of bright gold ;
There's not the smallest orb, which thou behold'st
But in his motion like an angel sings,
Still quiring to the young-ey'd cherubims.
Such harmony is in immortal souls ;
But, whilst this muddy vesture of decay
Doth grossly close it in, we cannot hear it."

In contemplating the different attributes of

the moon, first, and most striking, is that distinctness of light and shade which characterise her influence over external nature. Here are no lesser lights, no minor shadows to constitute a medium between the two extremes. The whole earth is under the dominion of two ruling powers; and every material object presents on one side a surface distinctly visible, while the other is lost in impenetrable darkness. Not a wreath of ivy, a projecting cornice, or a broken turret, but the moon invests it with a beauty of her own, more attractive to the eye, and more potent in its influence upon the imagination, from the depth of mysterious shadow by which it is contrasted. Beautiful as her light unquestionably is, when it falls upon the verdure of the sloping bank, where every flower, and leaf, and tendril have their shining surface contrasted with their shadow, we should scarcely pause to offer our tribute of admiration, by telling how often the poet's lay has recorded events which took place "on such a night," but that in glancing from this scene of silvery brightness, we behold the deep gloom of the surrounding woods, the narrow defile, or the hollow cave, within whose confines the queen of night, with all her power, and all her splendour, is unable to penetrate.

Another striking attribute of the moon, and one which seems more especially to bring her within the sphere of human sympathy, is her alternate darkness and illumination; which last is familiarly spoken of as a periodical visitation; for so powerful are the senses over the imagination, that it is with some difficulty we realize the truth, that when the moon is invisible to our eyes, she is in reality as present with us as when her soft light salutes us in our nightly wanderings. Thus we hear perpetually of the constancy, as well as the inconstancy of the moon; just as a similitude with either quality may suit the poet's need. Of her constancy, because, lost as she is to our outward perceptions, we are able to calculate with undeviating certainty the hour of her return; of her inconstancy, because how profound soever are the devotions offered at her shrine, that shrine is no sooner invested with the full splendour of her celestial brightness, than the ineffable light begins to wane, and finally disappears.

From the long established custom of appealing to the moon in our descriptions of mental suffering, we might almost be led to pronounce that melancholy was one of her chief characteristics, were not this poetical propensity easily

accounted for, by the enjoyments of the generality of mankind being of such a nature as to confine their attention to social, stirring, mundane subjects of interest or excitement ; and thus to leave little time, and less inclination, for making observations upon the moon : while under the influence of melancholy, which has in all minds the same tendency to silence, solitude, and contemplation, the eye is naturally directed to scenes of repose and serenity, and more than all, to the solemn aspect of the heavens. It is here that we look for peace ; and we all can remember, when through the long watches of the sleepless night, the moon was our only companion, the only friend who was near us under the pressure of our calamity, or who appeared to sympathize in our distress.

Surely the sweet influence of the queen of night is in its own nature more cheering than melancholy. How many glad occasions of social and festive entertainment are regulated by the moon. “ We will visit our friends when the moon is at the full ”—“ We will return by the light of the moon ”—“ We wait for the moon before we set sail,” is the familiar language of every day ; and how much more must the mariner on the mighty deep rejoice in her

welcome visitations, and hail her nightly radiance as she rises over the unfathomable abyss. Shines not the moon through the grated lattice of the prison, from whence all other gentle comforters are excluded, smiling upon the criminal in his feverish sleep, and reminding him when he starts into waking consciousness, that while his brother man, perhaps weak, fallible, and faulty as himself, had he been similarly circumstanced, is able to pursue, impeach, and condemn, according to the strict authority of laws, which take no cognizance of want of knowledge, of early bias, and more than all, of peculiar and incalculable temptation; there is still mercy in the everlasting heavens—an eye that looks down upon his earthly sufferings, beholding through a clear, and steady, and impartial light, all that is hidden from the scrutiny of man; and that an humble, solemn, and heartfelt appeal, even from out his dungeon, beneath his chains, or upon the fatal scaffold, may yet be made to that higher tribunal, whose judgments are as unparalleled in mercy, as unimpeachable in justice.

Is not the moon, amidst all the chances and changes that occur to us in this sublunary scene, still, still the same? We recall the

sweet and social evenings, when the moon looked in upon our childish play, through the trellice-work of vine and jessamine that grew around our ancestral dwelling. How looks that dwelling now? The vine and the jessamine are rooted from the earth, the walls are broken down, and scarcely is one stone left upon another. Where are the companions of those happy hours? Some have paid the debt of nature, and are gone we ask not where; some are so altered in their loves and friendships, that we know them not, or perhaps, they know not us; and others are scattered abroad throughout the busy world, chasing their different objects of ambition or desire, in which we hold no share: even our own hearts, though they feel the same to us in their capability of suffering, have learned to beat another tune, to burn with different fires, to be vivified with a new life, or subject to a fatality which we were far from apprehending then. Yet the moon—the lovely moon, is still the same, shining on with the same ineffable effulgence—teaching us that constancy is not an empty name, though we and ours have failed to find the reality—that there is purity and peace beneath the heavens, though we are still wandering in fruitless quest

of both—that there is an inexhaustible fountain of loveliness and delight, though we have wasted ours.

And is not the moon most kind, most charitable, that she reveals no deformities, brings to light no defects, but ever shines on—

“Leaving that beautiful, that still was so,
And making that which was not.”

Oh! it is wearisome in our daily existence to see the critic's eye for ever peering through a narrow focus of concentrated and partial light, to find out the specks upon the face of the sun, the soil of the lily, the footprints of the butterfly upon the velvet petals of the rose; listening with his ear sharpened to an acuteness that renders it sensible only of discord, to detect the misapplication of tone and emphasis in the eloquence that shakes the world, the wrong cadence in the voice that tells of anguish, the false note in the harmony of the spheres. Yet this is what men call wisdom—a wisdom which if it fails to subdue the ignorance and prejudice of mankind, at least destroys the capacity for appreciating the beauty and perfection of the creation, and the desire to bow with mute reverence and awe before its Creator.

It is this wisdom which intrudes its unwelcome presence upon our daily walk, rendering that walk most wearisome, and the society we meet there, infinitely worse than solitude. But the night returns—the calm and silent night, and the sweet moon rising over the eastern hills, goes forth upon her pathway through the heavens. Perchance an envious cloud advances, and her form is obscured by misty vapours; but they pass away, and her smile looks sweeter than before. Upon the rugged precipice, the dark impenetrable forest, the restless waves of the ocean, “her soft and solemn light” is falling, beautifying whatever it shines upon, marking out as with a silver pencil the majestic outline of the crag or promontory, but leaving the deep and frightful cavern at its base still unrevealed; tinging with radiant lustre the light boughs that wave and dance as if with very gladness in her welcome beams, the sprays of glittering ivy, or the lofty turrets of the ancient tower, while passing in her peaceful progress over every scene of gloom and terror, she seems to cast the dark places of the earth into yet deeper shade; or, turning the foam of the angry billows into crests of sparkling light, the troubled track of the

heaving bark into a silvery pathway, and the sails that flutter in the adverse gale, into the white pinions of some angelic messenger, she kindly offers to the imaginative beholder, a picture of sublimity for that of danger—of trust for anxious fear—of hope for murmuring and despair.

Is not the moon also a faithful treasurer of sweet and pleasant memories ? We might forget (in this world there is much to make us forget) what we learned before our minds were tainted by the envious struggle for pre-eminence, and the necessity of sordid gain, or soured by the disappointments inevitably attending both. The worldly man, the sharp keen hustler of the city, sees little to call back his thoughts to the days of unsophisticated innocence, and still less to recommend to his now mature judgment, what he would call nothing better than his boyish blindness, to his own best interests. But the bodily frame in time wears out, the city feast becomes unpalatable to the sickly appetite, and civic honours are unable to support the head they crown. Sleepless nights succeed to wearisome days. Perhaps his attendant enjoys that re-

pose, which he is unable to purchase with all his wealth. To sum up the amount of his gold, no longer relieves the aching void of his heart. There is a gnawing want still pressing upon him, even at this late hour of the day, which all his possessions are unequal to supply ; and he begins at last to question, whether they may not have cost him more than their real value. Lost in a world of vague and unsatisfying thoughts, the moon steals in upon his meditations. It is not with him as with more feeling minds, that memory rushes back with one tremendous bound ; but with his wonted caution and reserve, he begins to retrace the pilgrimage of past years, the silent moonbeams lighting him unconsciously on his way, and leading him by the chain of association, back to his paternal home. He enters again the once familiar habitation. He takes possession of the chair appropriated to the darling boy, and along with it the many pure and lively feelings, which the world had chased away. He listens to his father's gentle admonitions, and feels the affectionate pressure of his hand, upon his then unruffled brow. He hears his mother's voice as she sings their

evening hymn, and "Oh!" the man of wealth exclaims, "that I might be again that innocent and happy boy!"

If he who embarks his whole heart in the sordid avocations of life, is necessarily driven on to resign the noblest aspirations, and tenderest affections of his youth, the votaress of fashion becomes if possible more heartless, and more hardened in her servile and despicable career: it is possible from this cause; that in order to act to the life the artificial character she has assumed, it is necessary that she should sometimes wear the semblance of feeling, just in that proportion, and according to that peculiar mode, which may best suit the selfish purpose of the moment; and this empty mockery of the best and loveliest attributes of human nature—of its affections, sympathies, and high capabilities, has a more debasing and injurious effect upon the mind, than the total forgetfulness even of their outward character. But the woman of fashion cannot always keep her thoughts directed to the same brilliant point. There will be moments when she suspects the potency of the idol to whom her only devotions have been offered. With her also the exhaustion of the bodily frame, will produce a

pinning after that which has been sacrificed at the altar of the world—a longing to lie down and rest, beneath the sheltering wings of the angel of peace. Perchance she has stolen unnoticed from the busy throng, to breathe for one moment with greater freedom at the open casement. She still hears the tread of the noisy dance—the music—the glad voices—and she feels what no heart is capable of feeling without a pang, that her presence is not necessary to the enjoyment of her reputed friends, and that when her head is laid within the grave they will still dance on, without being conscious that one familiar step is wanting in their merriment. Her soul is oppressed. She looks out beneath the high blue silent heavens, and the moon is there to welcome her as with a sister's smile. It is to the moon alone that all human beings can appeal with an inward sense of sympathy; and to the moon at last she ventures to utter that complaint, which no ear has ever heard. "It was not thus!" the melancholy strain begins, but tears—true, unaffected tears are rising, and she looks down upon the clustering jessamine, whose delicate stars gleam out in the moonbeams, and send forth their odorous perfumes upon the gales of night. It

was not thus that she, that splendid mourner, weary with the weight of her own diamonds, and sick of the selfishness of her own chosen friends, looked up to the face of the pale moon, in those hours when the moon looks fairest—those happy hours when even she, the false one, was beloved. Her memory, the only faculty which she has not been able to pervert, returns to the bright season of sincerity and youth. Again she is walking by the side of one whom worlds could not have tempted to violate her confidence, or wound her love—one who was deserted for a worthless rival, in his turn to be cast off for another, and then a third, and so on, until the world at last became the only candidate for her affections, the only ruler of her heart. “It was not thus !” she exclaims, “that I was wont to look upon the moon. Oh ! give me back the loves, the friendships of my early days. Restore the capability of trusting, even though I should still be deceived ! Awaken in my soul the faculty of hope, though I should be disappointed still ! Rekindle my affections, that I may feel the possibility of loving, though I should never be beloved again ! Let me hear once more the voice of kindness, though it should be strange to mine ear ! Let

me listen to the language of truth, though it should condemn the whole of my past life !”

The mariner at midnight on the deep sea, looks forth when other eyes are sleeping, towards the bright opening in the eastern clouds, where the pale lustre of the rising moon gives welcome promise of her blessed visitation. Soon her full round orb appears in all its splendour, and the dark vapours float away, or gliding gently past her beaming face, receive the soft reflection of her smile, before they pass into the undistinguishable chaos of night. High into the azure heavens she now ascends, while the lonely helmsman chants to the heedless gale the songs of his native land. He gazes upon the wide expanse of heaving water, and ever as his eye dwells upon that silvery track of light that seems to lure him away to another world, recollections which the bustle of the day keeps down, and thoughts dear as the miser’s hoarded treasure, rise within his breast, fresh and spontaneous ; and he thinks how the same moon shone upon the woodbine bower where he first wooed the village maid, who blushed in her innocent joy, and inwardly exulted in the short-lived happiness of being a sailor’s bride. Has he not seen that bower

again? Yes, and the woodbine was still lovely, but his bride had lost her maiden bloom, and the cares of a lonely and almost widowed wife had made her prematurely old. Again he has returned to that well-known spot—that haven of his dearest hopes, and the babe that should have welcomed him with the kind name of father, was sleeping beneath a little grassy mound in the church-yard, while he had been far away in its hour of agony, and its last cry had been unheard by him. Once more he has returned to his deserted home. The mother too was gone to her place of rest, and two humble graves side by side were all the memorial that remained of his domestic happiness. What then? Does he wish that his marriage day had never dawned? would he extinguish the memory of the past? No, though amidst the stir of the busy day, or amongst his jovial comrades he thinks little of his wife and child, yet in the solitude of the night watches, when the moon is above his head, and no sound is to be heard but the ripple of the water against the vessel's side, he blesses that mild and gentle remembrancer, that she visits him in his loneliness, to tell him those tales of tenderness to which his ear has become strange, and to open

in his bold and hardy bosom those sweet fountains of human love which transform the character of the rude sailor into that of the avenger of the injured, the father of the orphan, and the protector of the helpless.

Thus ever sweet and pleasant to the watchful eyes of the wayfaring man, is the moon as she rises from her throne of clouds. He turns to gaze upon that welcome face, and thinks how many well-known and familiar looks are directed to the same object. Perchance he has been a wanderer through many lands, a voyager over the deep seas, a pilgrim of the world; yet ever on his wayward course, the same mild moon has been like a faithful and untiring friend, speaking to him amongst a strange people in the native language of his heart, and telling through the lonely night, sweet tidings of his wished-for home. Whether amid snow covered hills, through the frozen wilderness, along the skirts of the pine forest, far, far away, she guides the solitary Laplander; or, in more sultry climes looks down through the foliage of the waving palm tree, and glances over the bright surface of the welcome waters, where the Indian laves his burning feet: whether high above the

tower, the minaret, or stately dome, she looks down, a silent and unmoved spectator, upon the thickly-peopled city, the perpetual stir, the hurry and the rush of busy life ; or far away in the silence and solitude of some lone isle of the ocean, touching with her sparkling radiance the leaves and blossoms of that nameless and uncultured garden, and the rippling waves that rise and fall, and lull themselves to rest upon that unknown shore: whether through the richly curtained window of the palace, her modest light steals gently in, and gliding over the marble floor, or along the tapestried walls, rests in its silence and purity upon the crimson canopy of kings ; or where the cottage of the herdsman stands upon the lone moor, silvers the mossy turf beside his door, covering the grey thatch of the mouldering roof with her garment of beauty, and looking in with her quiet and approving smile upon his homely meal, blessing the cup of which he drinks, and lighting the parents' way, as they seek the couch of their slumbering cherubs to ask a blessing for the coming day, to return thanks for the past, and then to enjoy the refreshment of peaceful and untroubled sleep: over the waste unpeopled desert, the rich and fertile

fields which surround the habitations of men, the tempest-troubled ocean, or the hive of human industry, it is the same moon that meets the traveller's anxious gaze, and ever on his lonely and distant course, he feels it to be the same whose rays are interwoven with the thread of his early existence.

Yes, it is the same moon whose silver crescent was hung in the blue heavens when the first night shadowed the infant world with its mighty and mysterious wing. It is the same moon that rocks the restless tides from shore to shore, with a monotony of motion that marks out the different epochs in the life of man, and overrules his most momentous actions with a power which he is unable either to baffle or subdue. It is the same moon for the mystic celebration of whose metamorphoses, the king of Israel erected an edifice, the most splendid that human ingenuity could invent, or human labour construct. It is the same moon for the visible completion of whose perfect radiance, the Spartans, while yet their souls were fired with the noblest ambition, sacrificed their share of glory in the memorable field of Marathon. It is the same moon which inspires the most ecstatic dreams of the enthusiast, giving

to his earth-born visions, a refinement and sublimity, which belong only to that imaginative realm, over which the queen of night presides. It is the same moon upon which the eyes of countless myriads are nightly gazing, but which never yet inspired one unholy thought, awakened one mean or sordid feeling, or called forth one passion inimical to the maintenance of "peace on earth and goodwill towards men." It is the same moon which personifies in her refulgent orb that bright link of spiritual connection between this troubled life, and one that is without anxiety, and without tears ; hanging her single lamp of ineffable radiance above our nightly slumbers, like a beacon of hope to lure us to a better land—returning again, and again to this earthly sphere, to warn us of the danger of delay, to cherish our heavenward aspirations, and to teach us that there is a love, (Oh ! how unlike the love of man !) as constant and untiring in its faithfulness, as slow to avenge disobedience and neglect.

THE POETRY OF RURAL LIFE.

BEFORE entirely quitting the fascinating employment of tracing out the poetical associations of particular objects in nature, it is necessary to add a few remarks upon the effect produced upon the mind by rural scenery in general.

The great difficulty in the task I have undertaken, a difficulty which presents itself most strikingly at this stage of the work, is to avoid the folly of being too sentimental, or rather to escape the charge of wishing to lead the mind away from what is substantially useful, to that which is merely visionary. If the major part of society in the present day consisted of love-stricken poets and languishing girls, mine would indeed be a scheme unnecessary and ill devised ; but as the tendency of our present

system of education, our conversation, habits, and modes of thinking, is towards the direct opposite of sentimentality, we may fairly presume, that in the opinion of all candid and competent judges, this work will be considered harmless, to say the least of it; and that the writer will have due credit given for an earnest endeavour to assist in rescuing the spirit of poesy from the oppression of vulgar tyranny, and in guarding the temple of the muses from the profanations of avarice and discord.

The character of the cultivated portion of the present race of mankind is too practical, too bustling, too commercial, I might almost say, too *material*, to admit of the least apprehension that ideas should be brought to stand in the place of facts, that learning should be superseded by sensibility, or that vague notions about the essences of things should be preferred to a just and circumstantial knowledge of the actual substances of those things themselves.

It is unnecessary to state, that happiness, in one shape or another, is the great end we have in view, in all our pursuits and avocations; whether that happiness consists in amassing or expending money; in our personal

and sensual gratifications, or in the aggrandisement of others ; in maintaining the station to which, by birth or education, we have become attached, or in raising ourselves to a higher scale of society ; in obtaining and securing to ourselves the refinements and luxuries of life, or in cultivating the mental powers ; in looking far and deep, both into the visible and the intellectual world, for those principles of consistency, beauty, and harmony, which owe their development to an almighty hand ; and in recognising the work of that hand in every thing around and within us, from the simplest object of sense, to the most sublime and majestic source of contemplation.

The question is not, under which of these forms mankind is most addicted to look for happiness, but under which of these forms the happiness therein found, is likely to be most conducive to the cultivation and refinement of that part of his nature which is committed to him as a sacred trust, and will have to be rendered up, either elevated or debased, for eternity. I know that poetry is not religion ; and that a man may dwell in a region of poetical ideas, yet far from his God : but we learn from the Holy Scriptures, whose whole language is that

of poetry, as well as by the slightest experimental knowledge of the subject, that poetry may be intimately associated with religion, and that, so far from weakening its practical influence, it may be woven in with our familiar duties, so as to beautify what would otherwise be repulsive, to sweeten what is bitter, and to elevate what we have been accustomed to regard as mean or degraded.

It is not thus with sordid or artificial life. Poetry neither can, nor will dwell there. The atmosphere is too dense, and those who inhale it acquire a taste for its impurities, upon the same principle as that on which the victim of habits more gross and vicious learns to love the odour of the deleterious bowl, because it is associated with the gratification of his brutal appetites.

I am far from wishing that all men were poets; or that the practical and necessary rules of education, should give place to the lawless vagaries of fancy, or the impulse of feelings uncontrolled: but I do wish that these rules and the attention they require, did not occupy the whole season of youth, without leaving time even to *feel* that they are essential. I do wish that men and women too, would

sometimes pause in their hurry after mere verbal knowledge, to think for themselves ; and turn away occasionally from the pile of fresh books which every day sees placed before them, to study that which never was, and never can be written—the wide field of nature ; not only as it lies spread before their actual view, but as it expands in their own minds, teaching them by the gradual unfolding of the eternal principles of truth, that we have faculties of the heart, as well as of the head, and that we must hereafter render an account of a moral, as well as of an intellectual nature.

How far my impressions in favour of a country life, may arise from early habit and association, I am not prepared to say ; and I must be candid enough to grant, that the state of society in remote and isolated districts, does not present an aspect at all calculated to support the idea that our moral faculties are improved in proportion to the means we enjoy of cultivating an acquaintance with external nature ; but the fact that this opportunity alone is insufficient to produce the effect, by no means proves, that in conjunction with other advantages it is not powerfully conducive to the end desired. In the country, man may be as brutish, as stulti-

fied, and as incapable of every gentle or sublime emotion, as in the city he may be gross, selfish and insensible to the happiness and misery of others : but it is no more the fault of nature when the eye has not been opened to behold her beauties, than it is the fault of the musician when his auditors are without the sense of hearing. I speak of the enjoyment which nature is capable of affording, not of that which it necessarily forces upon man, whether he looks for it or not ; nor does the fact, that remote dwellers in the country have amongst themselves a very low standard of intellectual merit, prove anything against my argument ; since I believe it may be asserted with confidence, that no poet of eminence in his art, and but few intellectual characters remarkable for the best use of the highest endowments, ever lived, who had not at some time or other of their lives, studied nature for themselves, imbibed strong impressions from their own observation of the external world, and from these impressions drawn conclusions of the utmost importance to society at large.

He whose mind is once deeply imbued with poetic feeling, may afterwards enter into the ordinary concerns of life, and even engage in

the active commerce of the world, without losing his elevated character. It is only when substituted for common sense, that poetic feeling can be absurd or contemptible. Blended with our domestic occupations, its office is to soften, harmonize, and refine; and carried along with us through the more conspicuous duties of social and public life, it is well calculated to remind us, that there is a higher ambition than that of accumulating wealth, and that we have capabilities for intellectual happiness, which may be freely and fully exercised without interference with our worldly interests.

It is not then by merely dwelling in the country, that men become poetical; nor by working their way by fair and honourable means, to pecuniary independence, that they necessarily sacrifice the best part of their nature: though it must be confessed, that the ordinary routine of city life, as it is generally conducted, has a tendency to extinguish, rather than excite poetic genius. The principal reason why it does this, is obvious to the candid observer. The mind as well as the body is always in need of food, and this necessity it naturally prefers to supply, with the least possible expense of pain or labour. If facts

of great number and variety are continually set before us, little attention will be paid to principles; because facts can be received with no exertion, while principles must be investigated and examined, to be in any degree understood. In towns, the news of the day is eagerly inquired after, and public journals, travellers, and frequent meetings, furnish for the general demand a constant supply of facts; while in the country even facts have often to be sought for with considerable labour and industry, and can only be enjoyed, with long intervals between every fresh accession of intelligence. Thus a really energetic mind, learns to connect an immense number of ideas, with the few facts which do transpire in the country; but a mind of quiet and lethargic character, sinks into nothingness, and one of still lower grade, active only for loose or malicious purposes, fills up the void in social communion, with inferences falsely drawn, uncharitable inuendos ingeniously thrown out, and conclusions too frequently both injurious and unjust.

I have said that a great deal may be made of the few facts which do transpire in the country. "Impossible!" exclaims the precocious youth, learned alone in civic lore. "You only hear the

news once a week, and as to your facts, what are they? The return of the swallow, seedtime, and harvest, a shower of rain, or a thunder storm; and what is all this to the community at large?" I answer, it is a great deal to those individuals who choose to reflect. It is true we are sometimes a week later than you, in learning what have been the movements of a certain foreign army, that a cabinet minister has been dismissed, and that an elopement has taken place in high life. There are even facts similar to these, which occur without ever reaching us at all, which is a proof that they are of as little importance to us,* as the building of our rooks, the scattering of our grain, or the reaping of our corn to you. You snatch up the Morning Post, and read of this interesting elopement; we learn with as much interest that the kite has seized our favourite dove. You read that a once popular statesman has been overthrown, by the strength of opposing party; we hear that a former servant of our own, has been dismissed from his place. You read of the dismemberment of Poland; we are startled with the intelligence, a few hours earlier, that the fox has been making dreadful ravages amongst our poultry. What follows? Our conclusions are

at least as philosophical as yours, and if you take time to reflect, it is most probable they will both amount to this—that the weak must be the victims of the strong, all the world over; that propensities to rapine, cruelty, and wrong, are permitted to deface the glory of the earth, for reasons which neither you nor we can understand; and that man when he boasts too proudly of his superiority in the creation, forgets that in the most malignant and injurious attribute of the brute he is at least his equal.

And then our returning swallows, our seed-time, and harvest, our rains and thunder storms, of which you think so little; why they supply us with inexhaustible food for deep anxiety, earnest calculation, ardent hope, and trembling fear; and sometimes with gratitude as warm as if the success which crowned our labours, was visibly and palpably bestowed immediately by the hand of the Giver of all good. We hail the birds of spring, as the blessed messengers of hope—the seed is scattered in faith—the harvest is reaped in joy—the rains descend, and we give thanks for the opening of those fountains, whose source, and whose seal is above—the thunders roll, and we bow before the terrors of the Almighty.

Man *may*, unquestionably, enjoy the same sensations in the city. Surrounded by the work of human hands, he *may* look up and bless the power which bestowed such faculties and means upon his creatures ; but it is a fact which few will pretend to deny, that the more the mind is interested and occupied with artificial things, the more it is carried away from the truth that is in nature ; and the greater the number of objects which intervene between us and the great First Cause of all, the less fixed and reverential are our views of heaven. We know by reasoning that God is no more present in the rolling thunder than in the social meeting, or the secret thought ; but our impressions are often stronger and deeper than our reasoning : and when we stand alone in the silent night, and look up to the starry heavens ; when we watch the play of the lightning, or listen to the roaring blast ; when we gaze upon the wide expanse of heaving ocean, or on the peaceful bosom of the lake, slumbering in its mountain cradle at the feet of its majestic guardians, whose brows are in the sky, mantled with clouds, or crowned with golden glory ; when we watch the silvery fall of summer's evening dew, the sunset in the west, or the moon's

uprising over the eastern hills, we naturally look upon these interesting phenomena as immediately influenced by an omnipotent hand, and advancing one step farther, penetrate within the veil, and find ourselves alone with God.

With regard to the mere amusements of the country, it is very natural for townspeople—such as are accustomed to games of skill and hazard—to dress-parties, plays, and concerts, to ask in what they can possibly consist. Let us in the first place observe a group of children at play beneath the flowery hawthorn, their cheeks suffused with the rosy hue of health, and their bright eyes sparkling with that inward joy which naturally animates the infant mind. Nobody can tell what they are playing at—they do not know themselves. They have no names or set rules by which their gambols are restrained; but when they start off from their sequestered retreat, bounding over the grass like young fawns, you see at once that it is the fresh air, the glowing health, and above all, the glorious liberty of the country which constitutes their enjoyment. Then they have an intimate and familiar acquaintance with every thing around them, with the woods, and the winding paths, the song of the different

birds, and the course of the streams that come down from the hills. Upon all or most of these the seasons have considerable influence, and the welcome appearance of spring, the withering of autumn, the heat of summer, and the winter's snow, have trains of association in the youthful mind, which supply them with a perpetual source of amusement, blended with instruction. Added to which, they not unfrequently have the care of domestic animals, and feel almost as much interest in their fate as in that of their fellow creatures. They soon learn that their kindness allures, and that their rebukes repel. This makes them observant of the happiness and the misery of the creatures committed to their charge, and lays the foundation of social and benevolent feelings, which continue with them through the rest of their lives. As the mind acquires strength and begins to investigate, what a field of inquiry then lies before them—the fall of the rains—the density of the atmosphere—the gathering of clouds—the fertility of the earth—the principles of vegetation and vitality—the production of flowers and fruits—the source of streams—the planetary system—chemical agency—and the study of electricity, that mighty and mys-

terious power, which operates through earth and air in a manner yet but partially understood, though producing some of the most wonderful and sublime phenomena in nature.

Are these amusements of a kind to be neglected or contemned by a rational and intellectual being? Are they not rather such as we ought to seek every possible means of rendering familiar and attractive to the youthful mind? And surely there can be no means more likely than to retire sometimes within the bosom of nature, where the development of Almighty power is obvious above, around, and beneath us.

But above almost all other peculiarities belonging to a country life, I would place that homefeeling which has the power through the whole course of our lives to bring back the wandering affections, and centre them in one point of space—one point of importance, to a very limited portion of the community, but a portion consisting of our nearest and dearest connections. In towns there can be comparatively little of this feeling. A man steps out of his door immediately upon common ground. The house he lives in is precisely like his neighbour's, one of a number which he returns

to without attachment, and leaves without regret. But in the country, not only the grass we tread on, the paths, the trees, the birds that sing above our heads, and the flowers that bloom beneath our feet, but the very atmosphere, around us seem to be our own. There is a feeling of possession in our fields, our gardens, and our home, which nothing but a cruel separation can destroy; and when absent, far away upon the deep sea, travelling in foreign lands, or driven from that home for ever, we pine to trace again the familiar walks, and wonder whether the woods and the green lawn are looking the same as when they received our last farewell. In the haunts of busy life, the music of our native streams comes murmuring again upon our ear; we pause beneath the cage of the prisoned bird, because its voice is the same as that which cheered our infancy; and we love the flowers of a distant country when they resemble those which bloomed in our own.

There are other wanderers besides those who stray through foreign realms—wanderers from the ways of God. Perchance we have spurned the restrictions of parental authority, and cast away the early visitations of a holier love; but

the homefeeling, which neither change of place nor character can banish from our bosoms, renews the memory of our social ties, and draws us back to the deserted hearth. Along with that memory, associated with the soothing of affection which we have lived to want, and the wisdom of sage counsel which experience has proved true, the tide of conviction rushes in upon the burdened heart, and the prodigal, rousing himself from the stupor of despair, exclaims, "I will arise and go to my father!"

It is difficult for those whose hearts and homes are in the city, fully to appreciate the enjoyment arising from rural scenery; but there are others whose homes are there, yet whose hearts are not wholly absorbed in city news, and scenes, and customs. These have probably, at some time or other of their lives, known what it was, not merely to make an excursion to Richmond, Hampstead, or Windsor, but to go far away into the country, amongst the hills, and the valleys, where the rattling of wheels, or the crack of the coachman's whip, was never heard. What, let me ask, were their sensations, as they rose higher and higher up the side of the mountain, at every step taking in a wider view of the land-

scape, until it lay beneath them like a garden, in which the ancient woods were fairy groves, and the rivers threads of silver, now seen, now lost, but never heard, even in their floods and falls, at that far height. What are the feelings of the traveller, when standing on the topmost ridge, a mere speck in that stupendous solitude, while the fresh breezes of an unknown atmosphere sweep past him, and he muses upon the past, and feels the impressive truth, that not only the firm rock on which he stands, but the surrounding hills, with their beetling brows, and rugged pinnacles, and hollow caves, are the same as on that great day when the waters of the deluge disappeared from the face of the earth—that the art of man is impotent against the imperishable fabric upon which he rests—that the ploughshare never has been there—nor track of wandering beast, nor nest of soaring bird, nor hum of laden bee—nothing but the winds, the rolling clouds, the lightning and thunder, those tremendous agents of eternal Power, before whom the boasted sovereign of creation lies trembling in the dust. What are his feelings when he reflects that such as this new and mighty world appears to him, such it will remain when he and his, with their ambi-

uous hopes and envied honours, are buried and forgotten ! These are sensations peculiar to the situation, which words are inadequate to describe. Too deep for utterance, too powerful for language, they teach a wisdom more profound than is to be acquired in all the schools of man's devise. I would ask again, how the wanderer on the mountain's summit has looked back to the narrow sphere of social life, which he has been wont to call the world ! Its laws, conventional but arbitrary, by which his past conduct has been influenced, what are they here ? Scarcely more important than those which regulate the movements of a community of insects, confined within the limits of a little mound of earth. Where now is the tremendous and potent voice of public opinion, resounding in authoritative tones from house to house, from heart to heart ? Upon the mountain's brow, beneath the blue arch of heaven, it is silent, lost, and forgotten. Where are the toils, the anxieties, the heart-aches, which consume the vitality of our existence, in the lower region of our sordid and selfish avocations ? Already they have assumed a different character ; and, despising the nothingness—the worse than nothingness of their ultimate end, he re-

solves to give them to the winds, and henceforth to live for some more exalted and noble purpose.

There is no danger that man should feel himself too little, or his Maker too great. If there were, he would do well to confine himself to a sphere, in which nothing is so obvious as the operation of man's ingenuity and power. But since we are all too much engaged in the strife, and the bustle, and the eagerness which is necessary to insure an average of material comforts; since individuality of character is too much sacrificed to the arbitrary rules of polished life; since by associating exclusively with man in an artificial state of being, the generous too frequently become selfish, the gentle hardened, and the noble debased: it is good to shake off occasionally the unnatural bondage by which the aspiring spirit is kept down, to go forth into the woods and the wilds, and to feel, though but for a day or an hour, that man was born for something better than to be the slave of his own bodily wants. Each time that we experience this real independence of mind, we ascend one step higher in the scale of moral existence; and if circumstance or dire necessity should prevent the frequent recur-

rence of such feelings, we may at least secure a solid and lasting good, by learning in this way to appreciate the mental elevation of others.

I am not, even on this subject, so blind an enthusiast, as to attempt to support my argument in favour of rural life on the ground of the greater appearance of vice in the town than in the country ; because I am one of those who believe that the vacancy of mind, the gross bodily existence, the moral apathy, which too frequently prevail amongst persons who lead an isolated life, are quite as much at variance with the Divine law, as vices which are more obvious, and which consequently fall under the cognizance of human statutes. If, amongst congregated multitudes, we are shocked to find so much of riotous indulgence, treachery, outrage, and crime of every description, we are, on the other hand, cheered with the earnest zeal, the perseverance, the disinterestedness, which are brought into exercise to counteract these evils. While in the country, where men sit still and wonder alike at both extremes, the average of moral good is certainly not higher, because vice being less obvious, the fear of its fatal consequences does not stimulate to those

meritorious exertions which proceed from true Christian love. The country may be abused as well as the town; and since the inhabitants of both, for the most part, fall into their stations from circumstances rather than inclination, or if from inclination, settle themselves at a time of life when they are incapable of judging of the privileges peculiar to either, it is not to be supposed that they will always make the best use of the advantages around them; and those which abound in great number and variety in the country, certainly add weight to the moral culpability of such individuals as live stupidly beneath the open sky, in the midst of fields, and woods, and gardens, without exhibiting more mental energy than is displayed by their own flocks and herds.

After remarking with regret upon the inertness and apathy of disposition too obvious in the country, we must in common justice observe, that where there does exist sufficient mental energy for the display of peculiar traits of character, such traits have a degree of strength and originality seldom found amongst the inhabitants of the city, where social institutions have a tendency to bring individuals together upon common terms, and thus to

render them more like each other; and where the frequent contact of beings similarly circumstanced rubs off their eccentricities, and wears them down to the level of ordinary men.

The friendships and acquaintances of the country are formed upon a system essentially different from that which holds society together in more compact and congregated masses. The ordinary style of visiting in towns does little towards making people acquainted with each other. Commonplace remarks upon general topics—remarks which derive no distinctive character from the lips which utter them, fill up the weary hours of each succeeding visit; while the same education, and the same style of living, are observable in every different *set*, of which each individual is but a part—separate but not distinct. But in the country, where people meet more casually, and with less of common purpose and feeling, where they often spend a considerable time together under the same roof, thrown entirely upon their own resources, and unacquainted with any general or prevailing topic of conversation, they necessarily become more intimately acquainted with each other's natural character, with their individual bias of disposition, and peculiar trains

of thought. Dwelling apart from the tide of public opinion, they know nothing of its influence or power, and having established their own opinions, formed for themselves from their personal observation, their sentiments and remarks are characterised by their originality, and their affections by their depth. They are in fact, though less polished, less artificial, and less learned in mere facts than their brethren and sisters of the city, infinitely more poetical, because their expressions convey more meaning, their sentiments are more genuine, and their feelings more fresh from the heart.

In speaking of the intimate knowledge of individual character which rural life affords abundant opportunities of obtaining, we must not omit to mention the sum of happiness derived from this knowledge when it extends amongst our domestics, labourers, and dependent poor. The master of a family in the country resembles a little feudal lord, and if he makes a generous use of his authority, may be served as faithfully, and obeyed as implicitly through love, as any old English baron ever was through fear. The agricultural labourer becomes attached to the soil which he cultivates. He feels as if he had a property in the fields of his master, and this

feeling extends not only to the produce of his toil, but, through many links of natural connection, to the interest of his master and the general good of his family; while, on the other hand, his own wants and afflictions, and those of his wife and children, are made known through the kind visitations of charity, and soothed and relieved, with a familiarity and unison of feeling which goes almost as far as almsgiving towards alleviating the distresses of the poor. There can be no distrust between families that have dwelt together upon the same soil, in the mutual relation of master and servant, from generation to generation. Both parties are intimately acquainted with the characters they have to deal with, and each esteeming the other's worth, can look upon their little peculiarities with kindness, and even with affection; while the mutual confidence, good will, and clear understanding which subsist between them, constitute a sure foundation for substantial and lasting comfort.

These advantages, peculiar to rural life, may appear almost too homely and commonplace to be admitted under the character of poetical; but in their relation to the social affections, and to the principles of happiness—that hap-

piness which is rational, intellectual, and moral, they are in themselves highly poetical, and must often be recurred to with tenderness and interest; at the same time that they supply the bard with subjects of pathos and pictures of delight.

Perhaps it may better please the fanciful reader to turn to themes of a more imaginary and unsubstantial nature, of which we find an endless variety in the associations afforded by rural habits, pursuits, and scenes. We have observed in the former part of this work, that scarcely a beast, a bird, a tree, a flower, or any other visible object exists, without an ideal as well as a real character; but we have not yet entered upon that region of poetic thought which is peopled with the imaginary beings of heathen superstition, and which to the mind that is deeply impressed with the beautiful imagery of classic lore, is perpetually associated with rural scenery. No sooner are the gates of fancy opened for the admission of these ethereal beings, than we behold them gliding in upon our favourite haunts, now floating upon the sea of air, dancing in the sunbeams, or reposing upon beds of violets; and then rushing forth upon the destructive ele-

ments, riding on the crested waves, or directing the bolts of death. Wandering in our fields and gardens, Flora, with her ever-blooming cheek and coronet of unfading flowers, becomes our sweet companion, while with her ambrosial pencil, dipped in the hues of heaven, she tints the velvet leaves of the rose, scatters perfume over the snowy bosom of the lily, or turns in playful tenderness to meet the smiles of her wayward and wandering lover, the sportive and uncertain Zephyrus. We penetrate into the depth of the forest, and the vestal Huntress flits across our path with her attendant nymphs. While seated under the cool shadow of the leafy trees, or stooping over the margin of the crystal stream, the Dryads bind their flowing hair. The harvest smiles before us with the glad promise of the waning year, and joyfully the yellow grain is gathered in; but we see the deity of rural plenty, with her unextinguishable torch and crown of golden ears, wandering from field to field, heart-stricken, and alone; too mortal in her sufferings—too desolate in her divinity. We hail the purple morning, and Aurora rises in her rosy car, driving her snowy steeds over the cloud-capped mountains, separating the hills from their misty canopy, and scattering

flowers and dew over her fresh untrodden pathway through the verdant valleys. We turn to the glorious sun as he rises from his couch of golden waves, and ask the inspiration of Apollo for the verse or for the lyre. We sail upon the ruffled sea, where the Nereïdes, sporting with the dolphins, lave their shining hair; or where Neptune, striking his trident on the foaming waters, bids the deep be still. We hear the bellowing of the stormy blast, and call on Æolus to spare us; or we listen to the thunder as it rolls above our heads, echoing from shore to shore, and tremble lest the forked lightning should burst forth from the sovereign hand of Jove.

Fanciful as these associations are, (almost too fanciful to afford us any real enjoyment,) they unquestionably supply the poet with images of beauty not to be found in real life; and they have also an important claim upon our consideration, from the place they occupy both in ancient and modern literature; as well as from the effect which this system of imperfect and dangerous theology produced, in promoting the refinements of art, and softening the habits and feelings of a barbarous people.

It is pleasant to turn from such visionary

sources of gratification to those which are more tangible and true—to the sympathy which every feeling⁷ mind believes it possible to experience in nature. There is no state of feeling to which we may not find something in the elements, or in the natural world, so nearly corresponding, as to give us the idea of companionship in our joys and sorrows. True, it would be more congenial to our wishes, could we find this companionship amongst our fellow-creatures; but who has not asked for it in vain? and turning to the woods, and the winds, and the blue skies, has not believed for a moment there was more sympathy in them than in the heart of man.

There is scarcely any human being so selfish as to wish to feed upon joy alone; and what a privilege it is, when separated from those who could rejoice with us, that we can share our happiness with nature! The soaring lark, the bounding deer, and the sportive lamb, animated with a joy like ours, become our brethren and our sisters; while the same light buoyant spirit that fills our bosoms, smiles upon us from the shining heavens, glows beneath us in the fruitful earth, or whispers around us in the fresh glad gales of spring. But, under the

pressure of grief, this sympathy is most perceptible and most availing, because sorrow has a greater tendency than joy to excite the imagination, and thus it multiplies its own associations by identifying itself with everything that wears the slightest shadow of gloom.

I will not say that the world in general is more productive of images of sadness than of pleasure; but from the misuse of our own faculties, and the consequent tendency of our own minds, we are more apt to look for such amongst the objects around us; and thus in our daily observation, passing over what is lovely, and genial, and benign, we fix our minds upon the desolating floods, the anticipated storm, the early blight, the cankered blossom, the faded leaf, the broken bough, or the premature decay of autumn fruit. This, however, is no fault of nature's, but our own; nor does it prove anything against the argument, that, whether happy or miserable, we may find a responding voice in nature, to echo back our gladness, and to answer to our sighs; that every feeling of which we are capable, in its purest and least vitiated state, may meet with similitude, and companionship, and association in the natural world; and above all,

that he who desires to rise out of the low cares of artificial life, whose soul aspires above the gross elements of mere bodily existence, and whose highest ambition is to render up that soul, purified rather than polluted, may find in nature a congenial, faithful, and untiring friend.

I cannot better conclude these remarks, than by quoting a passage from the writings of one, who possessed the enviable art of combining science with sublimity, and philosophy with poetic feeling.

“Nature,” says Sir Humphry Davy, “never deceives us; the rocks, the mountains, the streams, always speak the same language; a shower of snow may hide the verdant woods in spring, a thunder storm may render the blue limpid streams foul and turbulent; but these effects are rare and transient—in a few hours, or at least days, all the sources of beauty are renovated. And nature affords no continued trains of misfortunes and miseries, such as depend upon the constitution of humanity, no hopes for ever blighted in the bud, no beings full of life, beauty, and promise, taken from us in the prime of youth. Her fruits are all balmy, bright, and sweet; she affords none of those

blighted ones so common in the life of man, and so like the fabled apples of the Dead Sea, fresh and beautiful to the sight, but when tasted, full of bitterness and ashes."

THE POETRY OF PAINTING

IN turning our attention to the poetry of painting, we enter upon a subject which forms the first connecting link between the physical and the intellectual world. So far as painting is a faithful representation of external nature, it belongs to the sphere of the senses; but as it holds intimate connection with some of the noblest efforts and affections of the human mind, it is scarcely inferior to the art of poetry itself, in the value it derives from the diffusion of poetic feeling, through the countless varieties of style and character, in which it is exhibited to mankind.

The poetry of painting is perhaps more felt, and less understood, than that of any other subject to which we can apply our thoughts; nor is it easy to define what is the nature of the

charm by which we are fascinated on beholding a picture in perfect accordance with our taste, especially as this taste varies so much in different individuals, and even in the same becomes more select in its gratifications, in proportion as it is more cultivated and refined.

That the poetry of painting is not mainly dependent upon the choice of subjects is clear, from the most simple and familiar scenes being rendered poetically beautiful by the pencil of an able artist; yet there are lines of demarcation beyond which even genius dare not venture, and which cannot be transgressed without the most glaring violation of good taste. It is where the associations are such as are not only vulgar in themselves, but totally destitute of any claim upon the feelings or affections of the mind. Nor is it in the representation of scenes the most gross and degraded (though such do little credit to the taste of the painter); yet in them the violent passions which agitate our nature are frequently most powerfully and strikingly exhibited. Look, for example, upon a representation of the lowest stage of intoxication, and surely the pencil of the painter can pourtray no subject more loathsome and repulsive; yet even here the associations are not

necessarily such as are altogether debarred from connection with refined intellectual speculations. In contemplating such a picture, we think immediately of the high capabilities of man, and of the dangerous profanation and abuse of his natural powers, of the spotless infancy of the being before us, the love that watched over his youth, the hopes that were centered in his manhood, and that now he grovelling beneath him in his fall. This class of subjects then is not entirely beyond the limits of the field of poetry, though it certainly requires some stretch of fancy to prove them to be within it; yet there is another class so decidedly and irrevocably excluded, that it may not be uninteresting to mark the difference between them, and of these a single instance will be sufficient.

I remember seeing in an exhibition of paintings at Manchester, a picture of a huge red brick cotton-mill, so well executed, and so appropriately placed, as to look very handsome in its way; and no doubt that way was all-sufficient to the owner, who had a train of sweet and pleasant local associations with this picture, enjoyed snugly to himself, which if they were not poetical, had most probably a weightier

charm, and one which he would not have exchanged for the lyre of Apollo. The surface of the picture was almost entirely covered with the brick building, and by its side was the all important engine-house, with tall spiral chimney pointing to the sky, but alas ! with no heavenward purpose. It was a picture of a manufactory, and nothing more—most probably the owner wanted nothing more. There was not, as there might have been, a broken foreground, denoting the rugged course of one of those polluted streams which murmur on (for what can still the voice of nature ?) with the same melody as in its native woods, before the click of rattling machinery broke in upon the harmony of man's existence. There was no pale girl, with darkened brow and dejected form, returning to her most unnatural labours, a living and daily sacrifice to the triumphs of national prosperity ; there was not even that deep and turbid stream, that dense and perpetually rising fountain of thick smoke, bursting, as if with indignation, from the gross confines of its narrow birthplace, first darting upward in one compact and sable pillar, as if from the crater of a volcano, and then folding and unfolding its dark volume, until, assuming a more ethereal character, it floats

away upon the gale, and, ambitious of a higher union, mingles at last with the vapours that sail along the purer regions of the sky—no, there was nothing in this picture but a cotton-mill; and the wealthy owner, with a praiseworthy feeling of gratitude and respect for the origin of his prosperity and distinction in the world, had done his best to immortalize the object that was not only the most important, but the dearest to him on earth. Yet notwithstanding this was, in the opinion of at least one individual, a picture of great merit, it was unquestionably of that class to which no single poetical idea could by any possibility be attached. It is true that such a building as was here represented, need not be without its intellectual associations. It might give rise to some of the most profound speculations relative to trade, commerce, and the wealth of nations; all that I maintain is, that this picture could not in any way call forth the passions or affections of our nature, or awaken those emotions of the soul which constitute the very essence of poetry.

In order to render the poetry of painting a subject more tractable in an unskilful and inexperienced hand, it will be necessary to consider it under its three different characters—

portrait, landscape, and historical painting. Of these three, portrait painting is decidedly the least calculated for the display of poetical feeling, not only because it is generally practised under the arbitrary will of those who possess neither taste nor understanding in the fine arts, but because there are so few subjects really worthy in themselves, and these few are too frequently beyond the reach of the artist; while the rubicund and wealthy citizen, having grown sleek upon turtle soup, after retiring with his rosy consort to their Belle Vue, or Prospect Cottage, in the suburbs of the town, deems it a suitable and gratifying appropriation of some portion of his hard-earned wealth, to employ one of the first artists of the day in making duplicates of forms, which a full-sized canvass is scarcely wide enough to contain, and faces, in which the expression of cent. per cent., and the distinctions of white and brown sauce, are the only visible characteristics.

While the painter is at work, sacrificing all that is noble in his art to the sad necessity for sordid gain, the gentleman insists upon a blue coat and buff waistcoat, but above all, upon a gold headed cane, which necessarily mars the picture with a bright yellow spot full in the

centre. This however is a trifle by comparison, for the buttons help to carry off the glare of the gold, and the artist revenges himself by making the hand approximate to the same colour. It is in attempting to delineate the august person of the lady, that his skill and his taste are put to the severest test. With consternation in his countenance, he eyes the subject before him, and in the first agony of despair, queries within himself whether he cannot really afford to lose the offered reward. He ventures to remonstrate with great delicacy on some particular portions of the dress. But the lady is inexorable. It is a dress for which she has paid the highest price, and *must* look well. Money rules the day, and the painter, covering his palette with double portions of red and yellow, commences with his task. Upon the head of the fair sitter is a pink turban, interwoven with a massive gold chain, surmounting a profusion of flaxen ringlets, in the midst of which twinkle out two small blue eyes, faintly shaded by thin eyelashes of the palest yellow, while cheeks that might vie with the deepest peony, and a figure upon which is stretched, almost without a fold, a brilliant orange dress of costly silk, make up the rest of the picture.

It is upon the same principle, and with similar restrictions, that portrait painting is generally practised in the present day. But let the painter rule his subject, and the case will be widely different. He who is worthy of his art sees at once what are its capabilities. His imagination immediately places the object before him in some appropriate situation. He assigns to it a character of which it may be wholly unconscious—one to which it was by nature peculiarly adapted, though circumstances may have consigned it to a totally different destiny.

Perhaps there is no class of pictures in which the painter's want of taste is more frequently displayed, than in the portraits of children. We see them standing like wooden images, holding in one hand an orange never meant to be eaten, or flowers which it is evident they have not gathered; their hair smoothly combed, their frocks unruffled, and their blue morocco slippers unsullied by the dust of the earth. In short, they are always dressed in their best to be painted, and the mother is often as solicitous about the pink sash, as about the likeness. The subject is unquestionably one of great difficulty, because the beauty of child-

hood consisting, chiefly in the light easy movement of the playful limbs, it is almost impossible to make a child look perfectly natural when at rest, and not sleeping; and it is here that the skill of the able artist is exercised in carrying on our thoughts to what the child will the next moment be doing. If he does not place in its hand a bunch of flowers, he throws into his picture a vivid atmosphere, in which we are sure that flowers are growing; and by slightly ruffling the fair hair, letting loose the folds of the dress, quickening the expression of the eye, and giving a playfulness to the almost open lips, an idea of life and motion is conveyed, and we are deluded into the belief that the very next moment the child will start off in pursuit of the butterfly, and that he will bring home with him a handful of flowers gathered from the gorgeous carpet of nature, or a wounded bird found in his woodland rambles, to place on the maternal bosom, which has so fondly cherished him, that he believes it to have benevolence enough for all the wants and sufferings in the world.

It is possible that the same artist may be called in to paint the portrait of a poor gentle-

man, who having nothing else to bequeath to his children, is prevailed upon to leave them a likeness of the form they have been accustomed to venerate. The painter finds him in a mean and humble dwelling, dressed in a manner that too plainly shows his long acquaintance with urgent wants, and narrow means. Yet in the noble outline of the face, the fair and finely moulded forehead, when for a moment its wrinkles are smoothed down, but above all, in the symmetry of the mouth, and the graceful motion of the lips, he reads the sad history of that gradual fall from high station and noble fortune, which has never through the whole of a long life been able to degrade the soul ; and in painting the portrait of this poor gentleman, he makes a picture worthy of a place amongst the aristocracy of the land.

Or he may be required to exercise his art in painting the likeness of one of the celebrated belles of the day. It is possible that the arbitrary laws of fashion may have concealed the beauty of a form that is perfectly Grecian in its contour. The painter casts down the stately and unnatural fabric from the head, and leaving a few dishevelled ringlets to wander over the snowy temples, binds up the rest of

the hair so gracefully behind, as just to leave visible the noble pillar of the neck, which proudly supports the whole. It is also possible that the rigid rules of polished society, or early discipline, or sad experience, may have rendered cold, constrained, or artificial in its expression, a countenance that was originally capable of exhibiting the deepest passions, and the finest sensibilities of our nature. The artist whose eye is quickened to an almost supernatural acuteness of perception, sees all this; and in painting the portrait of one who is by compulsion a mere fine lady, he invests it with the beauty and the pathos of a heroine.

Nor is it in the skilful management of expression alone, that the poetry of this art consists. Though this is unquestionably the most important, there are minor points, which cannot be neglected without so glaring a violation of good taste, that the eye is offended; and as we have often had occasion to remark, no sooner are the senses unpleasantly affected, than the powers of the mind are arrested in their agreeable exercise, and the poetic illusion is totally destroyed. In the choice of costume, it is highly essential to the poetical charm of the

portrait, that every thing wearing the character of constraint or conceit should be avoided. All those striking peculiarities which belong only to a class of beings whose feelings and avocations are entirely separate from the sphere of high mental refinement, or intellectual power, will be rejected by an artist of good taste. The coarse habit of the monk may be made subservient to the poetical interest of a portrait, because it is associated in our minds with ideas of reflection, study, and strict mental discipline ; even that of a peasant is admissible, because his hardy frame may be animated by the bold independence and rude energy of a mountaineer ; but he who would paint a butcher or a harlequin in their characteristic costume, must forfeit every pretension to the poetry of his art.

The local partiality of the Dutch painters has rendered this error strikingly conspicuous in some of their historical pieces. Whatever may be the merits of this school of artists, the national prejudice which retained the familiar costume, habits, and customs of their own peculiar people, even when representing the higher scenes and circumstances of life, proves

them to have been but little qualified for the most noble and interesting branch of their art.

Besides the choice of costume, and of far higher importance, is the proper adjustment of colours, and other mechanical branches of the art of painting, which cannot properly be discussed in a chapter on poetry, but which are of unspeakable importance in producing that delightful combination of form and colour, by which the eye is so entirely gratified as to repose in perfect enjoyment, and to leave the imagination to wander as it will.

Entering upon the subject of landscape painting, it becomes much less difficult to specify in what the poetry of the art consists. There are certain fundamental principles, from whence our ideas of the beauty of nature are derived, which the slightest sketch is capable of illustrating, but which cannot be neglected without offence even to the most indifferent beholder. Of these principles, light and shade are the most important and conspicuous. Thus two objects, one to receive the rays of light, and another to receive the shadow of the first, are sufficient to constitute a picture. Let one of these be the massive stem of an old tree, grey with time, and shattered with the storms of ages,

wearing round its hoary brow a wild wreath of clustering ivy, and stretching forth one verdant branch, still clothed with dense foliage as in former years. Let the other be the weedy banks of a silent river, in whose clear depths the shadow of this ancient tree is reflected, and we have at once a scene of sufficient interest and beauty to rivet the eye and fascinate the imagination. Still much must depend, even in a scene so simple as this, not only upon the skilful conduct of the pencil, but upon the poetical feeling of the artist. Perhaps this subject may be better understood by illustrating it with a case in point.

It was, a few years ago, my good fortune to receive instruction from a gentleman,* who, whatever may be his other pretensions, must be unanimously acknowledged to be one of the most *poetical* artists of the present day; a fact which is sufficiently proved by the fearless and independent manner in which he can snatch up the most barren subject, and invest it with a mysterious beauty of his own creating. The piece which this artist first gave me to copy, was a pencil sketch of a rude entrance

* Mr. Cotman, now professor of drawing at King's College, London.

by a little wooden bridge, over a narrow stream, to what might be a copse-wood, or indeed a wood of any kind; for the whole picture contained nothing more than three or four trees, a few planks of time-worn timber, and the reedy banks of this stream or pool. My task was performed with diligence, and with no little self-approbation, for my friends pronounced it to be admirable; and I saw myself that the foliage of the oak was edged round with the most accurate precision, the rooks in the distance were eked out with the same economy of number, and the bulrushes that stood in the water were all manifestly tipped at the ends. While my heart bounded with internal triumph, I drew forth the interesting deposit from the portfolio in which I had conveyed it into the presence of my master, and impatiently watched the expression of his eye as he glanced over it. After looking at it for some time with less and less of what was agreeable in his countenance, he at last gave utterance to a low growl of disapprobation, and finally pronounced it to be bad in two ways—bad as a copy, and bad as a drawing. Although I was at that moment very much inclined to execrate the art so often called divine, I have since

learned to look with feelings of interest almost like affection upon that simple drawing, to which my master, with a few strokes from his own able and accomplished pencil, gave a character at once touching, beautiful, and poetic. What was practically the work of this pencil, it would be foreign to my purpose (even were I able) to define. It is sufficient to say, that through the illusion of the eye, the mind was forcibly presented with the ideas of space and atmosphere. My drawing represented nothing but an even surface, covered with a minutely extended texture, woven according to the pattern, of oak leaves, reeds, water, or whatever the uninitiated pencil might vainly attempt to imitate. In the same picture, after it had received a few touches from an able hand, the most unpractised eye might behold a distinct representation of a quiet day in autumn. The rooks, which had been stationary and silent, were now winging their way towards that woodland scene, cawing at intervals with the musical and melancholy cadence, which at that particular time of the year, and especially at that particular distance, turns their harsh tones to melody. The passage of the wooden bridge had now become quite practicable, and after

looking down into the bosom of the unruffled water, you might enter upon that unfrequented path, and hear the rustling of the withered grass beneath your feet; while high overhead were the majestic branches of old and stately trees, extended by the imagination beyond what was perceptible to the eye, farther and farther, into the silent depth of the forest.

From what I then saw of the metamorphosis wrought upon this picture, and what I have since learned by observation and experience, I am inclined to think that the poetry of landscape painting is dependent, in a great degree, upon the idea of *atmosphere* being clearly conveyed to the mind. That scene, however laboriously or delicately executed, which, from its want of general harmony, conveys no such idea to the mind, deserves not the name of a picture; but that which draws forth the emotions of the soul by a correspondence with impressions made upon it by the sun, the sky, the seasons, or the hour of the day, may be highly and intensely poetical, though simple and unpretending in itself. This idea must be strongly impressed upon the memory and the imagination of the painter before he begins his task. As in the natural world the colour and

character of every visible object is affected by the air which is invisible, so in all representations of external nature there must be that perfect harmony pervading the whole scene, which is in keeping with any particular state of the atmosphere, of which the artist may wish to convey an impression to others; and thus, through the medium of form and colour operating upon the eye, the mind receives distinctly and forcibly the idea of that which possesses neither form nor colour in itself, and which no eye is capable of beholding.

I never saw the want of atmosphere more striking than in a picture full of peacocks. It was intended to illustrate the fable of the presumptuous jackdaw adorned in borrowed plumes; but the jackdaw was only to be found upon examination, for there were three peacocks nearly as large as life crowded into a moderate sized painting, and two of them having their tails expanded, the canvass was literally covered with feathers. These feathers, it is true, were beautifully executed, and had the piece been called a picture of peacock's feathers, it might have been admired; but there was a total absence of some of the most essential parts of a *scene*, and the eye turned away with

weariness or disgust, while the mind remained uninformed as to the meaning of the painter, unimpressed with a single idea.

In describing this picture, my mind very naturally reverts to one in the same exhibition, almost immediately opposed to it in situation, but still more so in character. It was, if I recollect right, by one of the *Nasmiths*, and represented a sunset upon a level beach. The sky was still glowing with all the gorgeous tints of evening, but the sun was not visible, and there was neither cliff nor wave, nor headland to reflect his light. All was a complete flat, gilded with his sidelong beams, and the sea and the shore were alike unruffled. But the artist, acquainted with the principles of mind as well as matter, had not sent forth this mere flat to brave the consequent contempt of mankind. He had wisely given to his picture a focus of interest, without which it must have been a complete blank. We have before observed, that whatever is beautiful or sublime, does not create intense sensations of pleasure, without some link of human fellowship, either real or imaginary; so the painter of this picture had placed in the middle distance, or rather in the foreground of his piece, two human

beings, whose tall shadows fell behind them on the ground. They might be fishermen consulting about the tides, or travellers resting by the way, or poets gazing on the golden sky; their dress and appearance revealed nothing, nor was it of consequence that they should. They were human, and that was enough. Imagination could supply the rest, and people that glowing scene with all the images, familiar or fantastic, that wait upon the sun's decline. It was the perfect harmony of this picture which made the charm so irresistible—the illusion so complete; and whenever the delight or the beauty of landscape painting is considered, harmony must be acknowledged to be the basis upon which both are founded. It is true that the external aspect of nature presents perpetual contrast, both in form and colour; but this very contrast is in harmony with the whole: for our ideas of beauty are chiefly derived from the principles which pervade the external world, and amongst these we may reckon it not the least important, that there can be no brilliant light, without deep shadow.

In speaking of the pleasure derived from painting, I have found it necessary to make

frequent use of the word *illusion*, a word which might unquestionably be applied to many other sources of human gratification. But in reference to the illusion to which we willingly and necessarily submit ourselves, in order to find greater pleasure in the productions of the pencil, it may not be ill-timed to offer a few remarks in this place.

Those who have never studied the art of painting, intellectually, are not aware how much we are indebted for the pleasure we receive from it, to a natural process which takes place in the mind of the beholder. The painter who has no brighter materials than red and yellow clay to work with, can so dispose them as to represent the splendour and brilliance of a summer sunset, upon which we gaze till our eyes are almost dazzled with the refulgence of those burning beams. In the centre of his piece he places the glowing orb of day, smiling his brightest before he sinks to rest upon his couch of crimson clouds ; on either side are trees whose foliage is bathed in the same golden hues, and if skilfully managed, they will form a vista terminating in excess of light ; while the whole is enlivened by a group of panting cattle, some of them holding down their heads as if in the

very prostration of patient endurance, while their tails are curled about in every possible variety of posture, to show with what assiduity they are lashing off the myriads of insects, whose busy and unceasing hum is almost loud enough to be heard. On first asking why the little spot of yellow paint which represents the sun looks so much more brilliant in the picture than on the palette, we are told it is the adjustment of the different grades of light which thus increases the brightness of the centre. But let the same colours be placed without any regard to form in the same order on the palette, and we behold nothing but a heap of paint, upon which we might gaze till doomsday without being dazzled. It is because we know that that particular appearance of the sun, the sky, the earth, the trees, and the cattle, is in reality the invariable accompaniment of intense heat, so, on perceiving the same appearance in a picture, we persuade ourselves that it is so there. If in the same scene, and with precisely the same colours, the artist should represent the violence of a gale of wind; or if instead of the cattle, but in the same situation, and still with the same colours, he should place a leafless tree, a cottage with its roof covered with snow, and a miserable,

half-starved man, vainly endeavouring to fold a blanket round his shivering limbs, there is no eye that would feel the same difficulty, in gazing on the picture, no mind, either of man or woman, that would be able, while contemplating such a scene, to undergo the process of (what is now commonly called) *realizing* the ideas of light and heat.

In the selection of animals, or individual objects thrown in from choice to diversify a picture, the landscape painter finds wide scope for the display of his poetic feeling. The introduction of fat cattle is an error into which none could fall who was not either a novice in his art, or an agriculturist irrevocably wedded to the best system of rearing live stock. And why? Because our associations with fat cattle, whatever satisfaction they may yield in the kitchen or larder, are decidedly too gross and vulgar in their nature to afford any gratification in a poem or a picture. Far be it from the writer of this chapter to depreciate the value of fat cattle, or any other agricultural produce; but everything has an appropriate place, and there is but one kind of picture in which fat cattle would be in theirs. I will leave the reader to judge how far that kind is worthy of the gra-

phic art. Let the subject be a red brick farm house, with a barn extending on one side, and a square plot of garden ground on the other, circular corn stacks, and a red tiled-pigeon house in front, with fields in the distance, smoothed down by constant culture, and intersected with neatly clipped hedgerows running at right angles all over them; then fat cattle would unquestionably be well placed in the foreground, and the picture, merely as such, would possess the beauty of harmony in all its parts, though it might be impossible to call it poetical.

After condemning an extreme case, the mind, by a natural effort, rushes towards its opposite in search of that gratification which it has failed to find, and the idea which now presents itself, is that of a wild and varied landscape, with distant mountains, rugged precipices, deep groves, green slopes, foaming cataracts, and wandering rills. Upon the verdant banks of one of these, beneath the shade of a "wide spreading beech," the artist places, immediately in the foreground, no less a personage than Apollo himself, while the Muses dance before him to the music of his lyre, and winged loves, and agile graces, skip from rock

to rock, or float upon the ambient air. Does the picture please? No; because, in the first instance, it is not true to nature,* and wherever the conceit of man's imagination breaks in upon the harmony and pathos which belong to nature alone, the poetical charm must in some measure be destroyed; and, secondly, because in the picture of a landscape, the idea of rural scenery should be distinct and predominant, which it is impossible it should be where characters so important as Apollo and the Muses are introduced. But let us still retain the landscape, and see whether something better may not be made of it. The artist who enters into the real spirit of poetry, will place upon the broken crags of the mountain a few shaggy goats, and perhaps a solitary stag, a wanderer from the herd, will be stooping over the side of the stream to lave its thirst in the cool waters of the forest. The foreground he will enliven with the rich colouring of innumerable wild plants, woven into a gorgeous carpet,

* "My notion of nature comprehends not only the forms which nature produces, but also the nature and internal fabric and organizations, as I may call it, of the human mind and imagination."—*Sir Joshua Reynolds*.

which here and there gives place to a sharp projecting rock, or yields to the wild vagaries of a small silvery torrent, that sparkles up from a grey stone fountain, and after filling a rude trough, shoots forth in bubbling eddies, and then loses itself amongst the thick leaves and brushwood overhanging the little narrow bed, which with the strife of ages it has worked out for its own repose. Beside this fountain, a woman is standing, not an angel, or a goddess, but a simple peasant woman, whose dress, coarse but gorgeous in its colouring, corresponds with the rich and varied tints of the foreground. She has just filled her pitcher from the pure stream, and is resting it for a moment on the side of the stone trough, before she treads back her lonely way to the herdsman's cottage, whose low-thatched roof may be seen half hid by the sheltering trees. Here is at once a picture, which, by awakening our sympathies, calling to mind a thousand delightful recollections, and giving birth to the most agreeable associations, rivets our attention, delights our fancy, and demonstrates more clearly than would a volume of definitions, what it is that constitutes the poetry of painting; and in this

manner, the most pleasing landscapes may be composed out of materials extremely simple, and sometimes even barren in themselves.

Perhaps no one was ever more intimately acquainted with the poetry of this branch of the art, than Salvator Rosa. In all his delineations of the savage dignity of nature, may be found a perfect correspondence between the subjects which he chose, and his manner of treating them. "Everything is of a piece, his rocks, trees, sky, even to his handling, have the same rude and wild character which animates his figures."

As the art of poetry may be classed under several different heads, so that of painting has, to the poetical observer, many distinctions of character not laid down in the technical phraseology of the schools. Leaving the more celebrated productions of the studio, to which there might doubtless be found corresponding specimens in the sister art, I will turn to a case in point, which to my own mind is both striking and familiar. It is the resemblance of character between Bewick's woodcuts, and the poems of Robert Burns. It is true, the artist in this instance has confined himself to a mode of conveying his ideas so simple and

unpretending, that the comparison scarcely holds good between the productions of the pencil and the pen. All that I maintain is the similarity of talent, of tone of mind, and moral feeling, displayed in their separate works. We find in both the same adherence to nature, without ornament or affectation, and we discover the same pathos in those slight touches of which genius alone is capable, with the same freaks of fancy, lawless and unrestrained, describing as if in very wantonness, scenes the most grotesque, ludicrous, or familiar; and then soaring away amongst the wild, the melancholy, and sometimes the sublime, yet retaining throughout the same moral impress, either dignified or abused.

I was once so circumstanced as to become intimately acquainted with the private studies of an artist, whose talent bore so striking a resemblance to ballad writing, that I feel confident had circumstances in early life directed his choice to the pen instead of the pencil, he would have used it with equal facility, and probably with as much lasting fame. The subjects which came under my notice were extremely small, and seldom contained more than a little patch of mountain scenery, with

two or three goats or wild sheep; yet such was the *character* of these fairy pictures, that while the eye dwelt upon them, the illusion was so perfect as almost to beguile the fancy with the belief, that the bleat of those wandering sheep, the scent of the purple heather, and the hum of the wild bee, were really present to the senses. You might gaze, and gaze upon those simple scenes until you felt the cool elasticity of the mountain breeze, and the influence of the clear blue sky, stretching pure and high and distant over the wide moor; while you wandered on, amongst the rustling furze and yellow broom, startling the timid moor-fowl, and rousing the slumbering lark to spread again its folded wing, and soaring into upper air, to sing another hymn of praise and thanksgiving to the Author of this perfect and wonderful creation, of which we feel ourselves in such moments to be no inconsiderable or unworthy part. What is there to remind us that we are unworthy? We feel not the stirrings of mean or sordid passion. We are away from the habitations of man. Away from the envy and strife, the tumult and contention, which mar the peace of his hereditary and social home. Away amongst the hills—away in the

boundless and immeasurable realm of nature, where it is impossible not to feel the love of a benign and superintending Providence—not to behold the work of an omnipotent Creator—not to acknowledge the dominion of a pure and holy God. If we are not worthy of his countenance and protection when we feel and acknowledge all this, when we bow in simplicity and humble reverence before the all-pervading spirit that animates and sustains the world; when—when are the creatures of his formation to lift up the prayer of gratitude, and return thanks for the blessing of existence?

But to return to our subject. After all that has been said of the importance of copying from nature, a few remarks may be necessary in reference to this expression, which is capable of being very differently understood. To copy nature is not merely to make the sky above, and the earth beneath, or even, entering into minutia, to make the clouds grey, and the grass green. The artist may copy nature with the accuracy and precision of a Chinese,* and yet never paint a picture that will excite even

* This remark does not refer to the figures upon china, but to the more elaborate paintings of the Chinese, where a delineation of every leaf on a tree is frequently attempted.

momentary admiration. It is quite as necessary that he should be able to perceive with the eye, as to execute with the hand. He must learn to distinguish, to separate, and to combine; but above all, he must be able to form a whole, not out of the different parts presented at one particular moment to his eye, but, as nature is perpetually changing, and as no two yards of the earth's surface are precisely alike, he must compose a whole out of the various aspects of the natural and visible world, which he has at different times of his life observed, and of which his memory retains a distinct impression; and this proves again, that painting as well as poetry requires time and opportunity for receiving such indelible impressions, without which the works of the most talented artist would never exceed in merit the representations in a school-boy's sketch book.

Sir Joshua Reynolds remarks, in his admirable lectures, that Rubens makes amends for the local peculiarities of the Dutch school, by varying his landscape representations of individual places, confined and uninteresting in themselves, by the introduction of a rainbow, a storm, or some particular accidental effect of light; while Claude Lorrain, who well knew

that taking nature as he found it, seldom produced beauty, composed his pictures from draughts which he had previously made from various beautiful views and prospects. It is a vulgar remark, often made upon pictures thus composed, that they are not true to nature, nor are they like a map, true to any given section of the earth's surface; *but they are true to that conception of perfect beauty with which nature animates the soul of the poet*, and which it is one of his greatest pleasures to see diffused over the external world. It is not by representing nature in detail, but in *character*, that the highest gratification is produced; and he must unquestionably be the best, as well as the most poetical painter, who conveys by his works an idea of the general character of the external world; in short, who paints not only for the eye, but for the mind. It is not the eye alone that is enlivened by the brilliance of a sunny morning, nor is it the eye alone that reposes when the sombre shades of evening fall upon our path. There must be so much of character in all representations of particular times and seasons, as to convey to the mind a corresponding idea of the general state of the sky, the air, the vegetable and the animal

kingdom, by which such seasons are invariably accompanied. Thus the landscape painter, by cultivating a familiar acquaintance with the minute varieties, and the distinct characteristics of the visible world; but above all, by studying profoundly those phenomena by which all that we know of the mysteries of beauty, power, and sublimity are revealed, will be able out of such materials to compose a whole, whose highest recommendation it will be, that it addresses itself forcibly to the imagination of the beholder, and calls up a train of associations with feelings and ideas the most exquisite and poetical.

On the poetry of historical painting, volumes might be written—but as much, perhaps too much, has already been said on painting in general, I will merely add a few remarks on this particular branch of the art. It is obvious, on first turning our attention to this subject, that the grand requisite for a poetical painter, is a mind so cultivated and informed, and at the same time so warmed by enthusiasm, as to enable the artist to enter fully and deeply into the subject before him. As an instance of this we need only contrast the touching pathos, the wild grace, and beauty given by Gainsborough

to all his cottage children, with some of our more modern and ephemeral productions, where a young lady with the airs and graces of a fashionable boarding school, or where at least a *lay* figure is dressed in rags and called a beggar girl. The little motherless looking children in Gainsborough's pictures offer a silent appeal to our best and tenderest feelings, and it is evident he must have powerfully *realized* in his own mind all that belongs to orphan-destitution, as well as to the simple habits and feelings of rustic life.

Next to this qualification for a poetical painter, is a capacity for combining a whole from particular and suitable parts, and the art of keeping all such parts in their proper degree of relation and subordination. If for instance a painter, in representing the death of a father of a family, should so far forget the dignity of his subject, as to make a favourite dog advance to the centre of the piece and lick his master's face, the unity of the whole would be destroyed ; and instead of the feelings being affected by sympathy with the grief there represented, the general and very natural exclamation would be—
* “What can the dog be doing?” But let the afflicted family, next to their dying parent, be

most conspicuous in the scene. Let the focus (if I may use the expression) of distress diverge amongst the domestics or less interested members of the household, and then in the distance the same dog might very properly be introduced, looking through the half open door with surprise and perplexity upon the unwonted scene, and standing with one foot lifted up as if doubting whether it were a place and time for him to venture in. The same kind of subordination with respect to light and colour is of immense importance in the formation of a scene. That picture which is broken up with a variety of spots of light and shade, can neither be agreeable to the eye, nor convey to the mind sensations of concentrated or powerful interest. But as the rules for the regulation of light and shade, as well as of form and colouring, belong more exclusively to the studio, I shall merely repeat in reference to this subject, that none of these rules can in any single instance be so violated as to offend the eye, or strike the fancy with an impression foreign to the purpose of the painter, without the charm of the whole being sacrificed. With the practical parts of his profession, the painter must make himself acquainted, upon the same principle that the

poet learns the grammatical use of language, and studies the rules of composition ; nor would a glaring breach of propriety of style be less pardonable in one instance, than a gross departure from the established rules of art in the other.

I am induced to make these remarks because we are perpetually hearing of the inspiration, rather than the cultivation of genius ; and that the merit of a painting, rather than the misfortune of the painter, consists in his being self-taught. The only excuse that can be made for so glaring a misuse of language, is, that it may serve the purpose of exciting in the vulgar mind higher notions of the influence of intellectual power. The constant labour and concentrated application which marked the lives of the most eminent painters, prove that immediate inspiration had little to do with the work of their hands. Indeed I know not what inspiration is, with regard to the fine arts ; unless it be the first moving spring of action—the desire—the thirst for excellence obtained at any cost, which operates upon the talent and the will, prompting the one to seek and the other to submit to, all the laborious, irksome and difficult means which are necessary for the

attainment of excellence. The painter knows well what it has cost him to compose one entire figure out of the various parts, which intense study has taught him are essential to any particular whole. He knows, but there is no need that he should tell the world, how many thousand sketches he has made of each individual limb, by how many heart-breaking failures the wreath of fame has been torn from his brow, what days and nights he has spent in the adjustment of the cloak of a favourite hero, how the head of his saint has been designed from sketches made in Italy, the feet of his martyr brought from Paris, and the hand of his goddess copied from that of his own lady-love at home, who had laid aside her stitching, and doffed her thimble, after many fruitless entreaties, consenting for five minutes only, and with the liberty of scolding all the time, to sit for the likeness of her hand. And this is what the vulgar call inspiration ! They speak too of expression in a portrait, just as if it were a sort of magical atmosphere thrown around the figure, and capable of converting form and colour of any description into a likeness. They do not take the trouble to observe that the eye-brows in the original are arched, and that the painter

has made them straight ; they are ignorant that the nostrils when depressed at one corner denote melancholy, when elevated vivacity and wit ; that the artist can immediately produce a total change in the character of the mouth, by a slight alteration in the closing line ; and that it is by a long course of study, experience, and unremitting labour, that he makes himself intimately acquainted, not only with the natural formation of the human countenance, but also with those muscular affections which accompany certain emotions of the mind ; that by these means he is enabled not only to perceive, but to imitate the characteristic lines and features, and thus to produce what is called expression.

On dismissing the idea of inspiration from the art of painting, and acknowledging the necessity of study and experience, we see that a poetical painter, though elevated to the highest distinctions of genius, can only have attained that eminence by a process not improperly called education ; though it may or may not have been conducted in strict conformity with academical rules. This process may be divided into three stages. First, he feels the moving spring of action—the ardent desire

which prompts the young artist to look abroad into the works of the creation, to search out with penetrating and comprehensive vision, the eternal principles of things, and to discover and acknowledge wherever it is to be found, the imperishable essence of beauty. Thousands of human beings are alive to this state of feeling, who from want of suitable advantages, from different bias, in short, from necessity, are hindered from advancing farther in the walks of art; and therefore thousands are sensible of the poetical influence of painting, who have never touched a pencil, or only touched one to their own shame and disappointment. But let the young artist, stimulated with this burning desire—this unquenchable thirst for physical and moral excellence, submit himself to the strictest discipline of the schools, will his energy be impaired, his genius extinguished, or his enthusiasm subdued? No. No more than the poet in selecting suitable words as the vehicle to convey his ideas to mankind, will lose the Promethean fire which gives life and splendour to his verse: and just with the same facility can the painter strike off a perfect picture without adherence to established rules, as the minstrel can pour

forth his harmonious thoughts in a language unknown to him before.

From the stern practice of the schools, the artist in time emerges, though only to extend the sphere of his education, and widen the field of those studies which the longest life of man is insufficient to complete. This brings us to the third and last stage, when the artist still animated with the same enthusiasm, launches forth into the world. Having become thoroughly initiated in the use of the proper means, he is now able to apply both the ardour of his soul, and the labour of his hand, to the production of those splendid works which his mind is not less able to conceive, for having been made acquainted with their internal construction, their peculiar distinctions, and limitations. Fully qualified to enter the realm of poetry, he identifies himself with the author, and regarding his hero in his moral and intellectual character, invests him with a nobility of mien and stature, which, if it is not true to his physical formation, is true to nature; because his nature was noble, and the character which the historian is able to describe with the intervention of time, and the change of scene and circumstance, he must impress upon the can-

vass, as it were with one stroke, and concentrate into the space of a single moment, the accumulated influence, and power, and majesty, of a long life of glorious actions. Animated by the spirit-stirring influence of poetic feeling, he can now take captive the fallen monarch, in chains which his own hand flings around him; he can allure the sylvan deity into bowers of his own constructing; personify the impassioned minstrel with a harmony of colouring, like music to the eye; and tinge an angel's wings with the golden hues of heaven.

The greatest merit of painting is, that like poetry, it addresses itself to those principles of intellectual enjoyment, without which its greatest beauties would neither be appreciated nor seen—principles implanted in the human mind, and often neither felt nor acknowledged, until called forth by the works of art. The pleasure we derive from painting, is commonly and superficially considered to be only as it is an *imitative* art. Why then do not coloured figures in wax, rank higher in the estimation of the world, than the more laborious and cumbersome productions of the sculptor? And why do not miniature landscapes, with the real elevation of hills, trees, and houses, made of

cork or clay, and coloured to the hues of nature, please more than the level surface, on which form and distance are denoted merely by a particular management of colour, so as to represent light and shade? The fact is, that in such performances, however ingeniously managed, nothing is left for the imagination. We see the thing as it really is, pronounce it to be very pretty, and think no more about it; while those in which the effect alone is obvious, and the means enveloped in their proper obscurity, strike the beholder with feelings of wonder and admiration; while through the medium of the senses, he receives just so much information, as is necessary to set the imagination afloat upon an immeasurable ocean of thought. Let hands profane colour to the very life an Apollo or a Venus, and we should see nothing more than a fine man, and a pretty woman; but in contemplating them as they are, we behold the eternal principles of imperishable beauty, handed down to us from distant ages, conceived by one nation, appropriated by another, and acknowledged by all with the profoundest admiration.

Painting and sculpture, next to poetry, constitute the grand medium by which the sublimest ideas, and the most exquisite sensations

are conveyed to the human mind. It is true the phenomena of nature are more essentially sublime, as well as beautiful; but nature speaks to us in a voice which we do not always hear, and cannot always understand. It is when nature is interpreted by the power of human genius, that we hear most forcibly, and if we do not understand, we *feel* the eternal truths which have their archetype in nature, and their corresponding impress in the soul of man.

THE POETRY OF SOUND.

AMONGST the organs of perception by which ideas of sensible things are conveyed to the mind, it is only necessary here to notice those which are most important and obvious—the eye, and the ear. Painting forms the medium of connexion between the eye and the mind : language supplies the mind with ideas, through the medium of the ear. Our attention has hitherto been occupied by visible objects alone, and having conducted them to the mind through one avenue, it is necessary that we take up the subject of sound, in order that we may make a progressive approach by another.

Sound is perhaps of all subjects the most intimately connected with poetic feeling, not only because it comprehends within its widely extended sphere, the influence of music, so

powerful over the passions and affections of our nature; but because there is in poetry itself, a cadence—a perceptible harmony, which delights the ear while the eye remains unaffected. The ear is also more subject than the eye to the influence of association, just in proportion as the impressions it receives are more isolated or distinct. The eye perceives a great number of objects at once, or in such rapid succession that they tend to destroy the identity of each, and so long as it remains unclosed, continues, to behold, and to perceive, without a moment's intermission; but the ear, besides being compelled to receive sounds, merely as they are offered to it, without like the eye, possessing powers of searching, selecting, and investigating for itself, has its intervals of silence, which render the impressions that have been made more durable, and those which are to follow more acute. Wherever there is any visible object, the eye, and the mind through the eye, may receive pleasure, because light itself is beautiful, and the glancing sunbeams even on the walls of a prison, afford to the unfortunate dwellers within, associations which connect those beams with the glorious orb of day, the skies, the air, and a multitude of agreeable

ideas which naturally present themselves ; but the ear is much less frequently gratified than the eye, especially in towns, where it is denied the negative enjoyment of silence. Compare the frequency of light and sunshine appearing even on the prison wall, with the occurrence of any sweet, or soothing sound within those gloomy precincts. Compare the beautiful specimens of art, the appearance of order, regularity, and magnificence to be seen in the city, with the perpetual tumult and din, by which the ear is distressed and annoyed. Compare the endless variety of charms presented to the eye by external nature, with the frequent silence which prevails in the country, and we shall perceive at once, that the ear is an organ less active, and less occupied than the eye ; and thus we may account for its impressions being so intense, as well as so peculiarly fraught with associations the most powerful and affecting to the mind.

Why certain sounds should be agreeable or disagreeable to the ear, may be best understood by examining the principles of music ; which, for more reasons than one, it would be unwise to introduce into the present work. The established fact that the ear is gratified by harmony,

and pained by discord, is quite sufficient for my present purpose; but why, under certain circumstances, we are delighted with sounds which are in themselves, and separate from association, the most intolerable discord, may very properly form a subject of serious consideration here.

Perhaps one of the most striking, as well as most familiar instances of this kind, is the cawing of the rook. When this bird is taken captive and brought into your room, nothing can well be more offensive to the ear, more harsh, or discordant, than its voice; and yet the same voice heard in certain situations in the open air is proverbially musical—heard as a number of these social and sagacious inhabitants of the woods are winging their slow and solemn flight, while their shadows flit over the richly cultivated landscape, and approaching the abodes of man, they wheel round and round in graceful circles, returning homeward with the same speed, the same desire, and the same end in view, the language of the whole community reminding the listener of the voices of wearied but contented travellers, well pleased to return from their journey; while they congratulate each other upon the peace, the

comfort, and the security which await them in their ancestral dwellings.

Though the language of the rook is extremely limited, and to those who know little of rural scenes or rural pleasures, extremely monotonous, it is capable of varying that language by a cadence or expression both familiar and interesting to the privileged class of beings who draw upon the inexhaustible resources of nature for their amusement and delight. In the spring, when the rooks first begin to be busy with their nests, their language, like their feelings and occupations, is cheerful, bustling, and tumultuous. Within the rookery it is perfect discord ; but heard in the distance, it conveys to the mind innumerable pleasing associations with that delightful season of the year, and the universal alacrity and joy with which the animal creation resume their preparations for a new and happy life. But it is in the autumn, when the bustle of the spring and summer has subsided, that the language of the rook is most poetical. There is then a melancholy cadence in its voice, heard slowly and at intervals, which is in perfect unison with the general aspect of nature ; nor is it difficult to suppose that this sagacious bird, perched upon

the topmost bough of some venerable tree, is making observations upon the external world, and sympathising in the universal tendency to decay, exhibited in the scattered fruit, the faded foliage, and the withered grass.

Of the same description of sound is the bleating of the lamb, which in itself is as entirely devoid of sweetness and melody, as the cawing of the rook; yet the voice of the lamb has been so long and so intimately connected in idea with the season of spring, with green fields and sunny slopes, with scented hawthorn, yellow cowslips, rich meadows, and wandering rills; as well as with plenty, and innocence. and peace; that our best poets have deemed it no violation of the laws to which genius is amenable, to mingle the bleating of the lamb with the sweetest harmony of nature.

One more instance of the same kind will suffice—the croak of the raven, which exceeds the other two in the harshness and dissonance with which it strikes upon the ear; and yet how perfectly harmonious is the croak of the raven when it echoes amongst the rocky heights of the mountain, or rising from the rugged cliffs of the shore, mingles with the hollow and tumultuous roar of the ever restless ocean.

The voices of the innumerable singing birds which people our gardens, fields, and groves, filling the air with one perpetual melody, are well known to every listening ear and feeling mind, both in their natural music, and in their poetical associations. From the sweet, plaintive notes of the robin, to the rich, full warble of the thrush and blackbird, they are in themselves, and separate from all relative ideas, most delightful to the ear, under almost all imaginable circumstances except one ; and that is, when heard through the bars of the solitary prison to which the wild minstrels of nature are too often inhumanly condemned. The two most melancholy sounds in the world, are the song of the caged bird, and the voice of the street minstrel. It makes the heart that has been accustomed to the wild, joyous minstrelsy of nature, sicken to hear either. Suspended in his narrow cage, and excluded by an outer prison from all participation in the fresh and genial air, or hung without these walls in the heat and dim and suffocation of the crowded city, perhaps the little prisoner feels a gleam of sunshine fall upon his plumed wing, and in an instant the fire of nature is kindled in his bosom. He may know nothing of the flowery

fields, let us hope he possesses not the faculty of remembering what once he was; but in his bounding breast instinct supplies the place of memory and imagination, and he pines for he knows not what. Animated with the energy of a wild free life, he flutters his light wings with a quick and fairy motion, almost spiritual in its grace, and oh! how touching in the perpetual fruitlessness of its efforts to "flee away and be at rest." Still the life of its little soul is unsubdued, and it warbles out its longest, loudest notes, even there, as if in defiance of the power of man, or to prove that there is a power in nature, a power of expansion and vitality, beyond the reach of his controlling, contracting, and contaminating hand.

There is a scene exhibited every day throughout the summer months, in the outskirts of London, which it is possible to contemplate until the mind is filled with misanthropy, and we learn to loathe and shun our own species. In fields sufficiently remote from the city to admit of their being the resort of birds, men are accustomed to station themselves with a trap and snare, in order to obtain a supply of singing birds for the London markets. The trap is a large net, so contrived that it can be

drawn up in a moment ; the snare is a little chirping bird, tied fast to the end of a pliant stick, which rebounds with the flutter of its wings, and thus the bird alternately rising and sinking, has something the appearance of dancing at will upon the light and buoyant spray. The man, the monarch of creation, all the while crouches on the ground to watch his prey, and when one little sufferer has by its fruitless struggles so well mimicked the movements of a joyous flight, as to allure its fellow victims into the snare, the fatal knot is drawn, the man chooses out from the number the sweetest songsters, and after depositing them separately in an immense number of little cages, brought with him for the purpose, they are conveyed to the market, purchased, and made miserable during the rest of their lives, for the delectation of London ears, and the benefit of society in general.

I know not whether it was the effect of my own fancy, or that such was really the fact, but the men whom I have seen employed in this business, looked to me uncommonly large, that is, personally large. There was so strange a contrast between their magnitude and that of the little fragile beings they were contending

with upon such unequal terms ; between the frantic fluttering of the decoy bird and the joyous flight of the free ones ; between this system of deception, artifice and cruelty, and the open and manly performance of that Christian duty which teaches us to deal mercifully even with the meanest of God's creatures, that I have always considered this scene as amongst the most melancholy of those incident to a congregated mass of human beings in an imperfect state of moral cultivation.

But to return from this digression to the immense number and variety of sounds made conducive to the embellishment of poetry, amongst which that of the wind is perhaps the most productive of poetical associations. Strike out this master chord from the harp of nature, and the music of the spheres would be harmony no more. Upon the bosom of waveless sea ; in the wide desert, where the sterile sand reposes unruffled ; or in more domestic and familiar scenes, when the sky is concealed behind a dense mass of motionless cloud, when the flowers no longer tremble on their slender stems, and even the aspen leaves are still, a voice is wanting to remind us of the prevalence and potency of one mighty element ;

and we feel as if the great spirit of nature were either sleeping or dead. The least perceptible movement in the air, the slightest sound of the passing breeze as it whispers through the leafy boughs of the forest, fills up the dreary void; an all-pervading intelligence again lives around us, and the imaginative mind holds ideal intercourse with invisible beings, whose home is in the wilderness, and whose mystical companionship is the symbolical language in which nature is ever speaking to her children. According to the temper and construction of that mind, the voice of the wind brings tidings either joyful or melancholy. It may whisper in those low sweet tones which are sacred to the communication of happiness, or it may answer to the sadness of the soul in long plaintive notes that resemble a continued, unbroken, and universal sigh. It may tell of the gardens of the East, of the perfumes of Arabia that float upon its buoyant wings, of the cooling flow of sparkling waterfalls, of the "delicate breathing" of summer flowers; or of the bleak mountain, the howling wilderness, the deep echo of the gloomy cave, the rustling of the withered grass, and the waving of the boughs of the cypress. Pre-

cisely as the mind is affected it interprets the language of the wind, and receives its portion of joy or sorrow from the associations which that familiar sound conveys. This, however, can only be the case under ordinary circumstances. There are situations in which the howling of the wind so closely resembles the low monotonous wail of inexhaustible sorrow, that the pleasure it is known to afford to some individuals of particular taste and feeling, can only be accounted for by supposing, that it forcibly reminds them, by contrast, of their own uninterrupted enjoyment. In the same manner, those who love to listen to the nightly tempest are wont to stir the fire and pity the sailors, and then turning inward to their own contracted circle of delight, congratulate themselves that it is broken in upon by no storms, invaded by no distress, and subject to no apprehensions of impending calamity.

Amongst the varieties of sound rendered familiar to us by their frequent and natural occurrence, the voice of the storm is the most potent in its influence. Whether it comes bounding and booming over the surface of the raging sea, or roaring through the stately forest, it is alike grand and terrific—alike full of

association with images of majesty and awe, and ideas of partial or universal destruction by a mighty but unseen power. The speed with which it travels seems scarcely to admit of any distinction in the feelings it awakens, but swift as the wind may be in its irresistible progress, it is not more so than thought, to which even a sudden explosion of matter affords time for the combination of a number of familiar ideas, by a process unknown to the mind in which it takes place. The raging of the tempest, to those who have never heard it with feelings alive to the poetry of nature, would be described as one continuous and monotonous sound; but to those who have, it is marked by a variety of distinctions, which accounts for the variety of sensations it occasions. To begin first with the hollow roar marking the interval when it seems to be retreating as if to gather strength, then the mighty gathering and the irresistible progress with which it rushes as swift as lightning through immeasurable space, leaving just time for the most appalling apprehensions, as it comes louder, and louder, and at last bursts upon us in one overwhelming tumult, mingling every imaginable combination of terrific sound, from the crash of falling matter, to the shrieks

of wild despair. And it is this combination of impressions, each bringing along with it a train of associations, which constitutes what is called the excitement of the scene—an excitement either distressing or invigorating, fearful or exquisitely delightful, according to the peculiar temper or capability of the mind of the listener.

There are three important attributes belonging to the wind, which combine to invest it with a character of intelligence. Motion, which gives the appearance of life to the external world; sound, which operates upon the mind through the medium of another sense, and resembles the universal voice of creation; and (if I may be allowed the expression) omnipresence, an attribute so potent in its influence upon our feelings, that from the searching, penetrating, and pervading power of the wind, we are accustomed to assign to it a character which differs little from actual personality. From ancient times down to the present moment, the wind is spoken of as a swift and faithful messenger. We say—"Tell it not to the winds," lest they should carry the report to the utmost parts of the earth, and communicate the tidings to its inmost recesses; "Give thy sorrow to the winds," that they may bear it

away on their elastic wings, and disperse it too widely for any single particle to remain perceptible, through the regions of illimitable space; and the great master magician who could wield at will all the passions of human nature, and all the influences of the elements, has thus powerfully represented the instrumentality of the winds in calling forth the self-upbraidings of a guilty conscience:

O, it is monstrous! monstrous!
Methought, the billows spoke, and told me of it;
The winds did sing it to me, and the thunder,
That deep and dreadful organ-pipe, pronounc'd
The name of Prosper!—

Next to the sound of wind, that of water is perhaps the most poetical; whether it falls clear, and sharp, and tinkling drop by drop into the hollow basin of rock, or wanders through the woodland with a warbling and mellow voice, or glides in the sheeted waterfall down the sides of the mountain, with a soft and silvery sound, or rushes over its pent-up channel, in all the wild tumult of an impetuous torrent—whether rising and falling upon the distant shore, with a solemn and monotonous motion, or bellowing forth the mandates of the imperious ocean, it threatens to overwhelm and

destroy, by sweeping every atom of moving or perishable matter, into the unsearchable abyss of its unfathomable waters ; it is the same musical voice that salutes our ear, whilst wandering over the mountains, reposing in the valley, or meditating upon the wave beaten shore.

As the representation of water in a landscape, is said in the language of painters, to give repose to the picture by harmonizing with the colours of the sky, so the soothing and melodious sound of water, harmonizing with the winds, softens down the wild cry of different animals, and the sharp shrill minstrelsy of the woods, blending into one delightful symphony, the universal voice of nature. If anything can be added, to render this symphony more perfect—if the refinements of art may so mingle with the simplicity of nature, as to enhance our enjoyment of both, it is when sweet music is heard upon the water : for music is the great master key which unlocks the feelings and passions of mankind, bringing to light more hidden things than ever were called forth or revealed by the direct language of words. When plaintive, it addresses itself to sensibilities that have long been dormant, or never were awakened

before, softening the flinty heart, and suffusing with the warm tribute of genuine tenderness, eyes that had forgotten to weep ; when light and joyous, it touches as with electric power, the springs of animal motion and elasticity, and in an instant the dark brow becomes enlivened, the old resume their youth, the weary step is quickened, and the shadows of life are trampled down in the light and playful dance ; when wild, and free, and national in its associations, it strikes the soul of the patriot, and the chains of the oppressor are burst asunder ; while, planting himself upon his native hills, with a step as firm as the beetling rock, a heart as invincible as the storm, and a front as undaunted as the mountain's brow, he defies the might of the invading foe, and nerves himself to defend his liberties or die ; or when slow, and solemn, and majestic in its strains, it falls upon the spirit like the mantle of deep thought, soothing down the idle flutter of evanescent joy, the fruitless stirrings of ambition, the selfish and sordid cares that desolate the mind, and diffuses a holy calm, which if not religion itself, brings with it one of religion's best and sweetest attributes—the sanctity of peace.

The evil purposes to which music is capable

of being applied, might afford a fertile subject for the pen of the moralist ; its power over the human mind, is all that is attempted to be established here. Operated upon by this power, how many thousands of human beings have been led on to do, and to dare, what they would never have dreamed of attempting, but for the influence of this potent spell—potent in its immediate effects upon the feelings and affections, but, Oh ! how much more potent in the recollections it awakens !

Music is the grand vehicle of memory, the key which unlocks the hoarded treasures of the soul. Words may define, and place before our mental perceptions, as in a map, all that has been ; but music, suspending the active energies of the mind, addresses itself directly to the soul, in a voice that makes itself be heard, amongst the tumult and excitement of present things—the voice of the irrevocable past.

We listen, as to a curious specimen of art, to the national music of some distant country, about which we interest ourselves no farther than as it occupies a place upon the globe. We listen, we criticise, we remark upon the peculiarity of the air, and then turn away ;

but there may be one in the crowd of auditors—a heart-stricken exile from that very country—a wanderer without a home—driven about from one inhospitable shore to another, and stupified with the very extremity of his sufferings—he hears that well-known strain, and in an instant plunges into the very centre of his early attachments, and the warm comforts of his ancestral home. He sees again the stately woods that bounded his hereditary domain, and hears the rush of the torrent that guarded and defined its limits. He stands again upon his father's hearth, and feels himself a free-born man, proud to maintain and strong to defend his liberties and rights. The music ceases; a shadow like the sable pall of death falls upon the ideal picture, and again he stands upon a foreign land, an alien, desolate, and alone.

We have all known some blessed season of our lives, before the wheels of time had grown heavy with an accumulation of harassing cares, when the morning was bright upon our path, and the evening fell around us calm and serene as the repose of our own souls; when the friends we loved, loved us, and the smiles that betrayed our happiness were answered by

smiles that told of gladness in return ; when the fields and the woods, the mountains and the sky, were parts and pillars of that great temple where we met to worship all that was sublime, eternal, and holy ; when the moon was the centre of love and beauty, and the sun of life and light ; when the rivers and wandering streams were a perpetual refreshment and delight, and the ocean was a flood of glory ; when the dews, and the flowers, and the stars of night, blended their sweet influences together, and the song of the birds, the murmuring of the waterfall, and the whispering of the gentle gales, rose in a perpetual anthem of gratitude and joy ; and when music, heard as it was heard then, told in its sweetest tones of all that we treasured of the past, all that we enjoyed of the present, and all that we hoped of the future. We have gone forth since then upon the pilgrimage of life, and the morning may have risen without brightness upon our path, and the evening may have come without repose ; we may have missed the warm welcome of the eyes we loved, and the smile that was wont to answer to our own ; we may have stood alone in the temple of nature without reverence, and without worship ; we may

have looked up to the queen of night without beholding her beauty, and to the sun without blessing his light; we may have wandered where the rippling flow of the crystal stream brought no gladness, and turned away from the ocean as from a desert plain; to us the dews may have fallen, the flowers may have bloomed, and the stars of night may have shone unheeded; and the grateful and harmonious voice of nature may have sounded without expression, wearisome, and void. But let the music of our early days be heard again, and the flood-gates of memory are opened; creation resumes the vividness of its colouring; the melody of sound is restored; and the soul, expanding her folded wings, soars once again up to her natural element of long forgotten happiness.

We have said that the song of the caged bird, and that of the street minstrel, are both sad; and yet how many millions pass on their daily walk, hearing, without regarding either. It is because music addresses itself to the most exquisite sensations of which we are capable, that its vulgar profanation is so peculiarly distressing; it is because of its own purity, and refinement, and adaptation to delicate feelings,

and high sentiments, that we grieve over its prostitution to low purposes; it is because it is properly the language of ecstasy or woe, that we cannot bear to hear it sold for filthy pence, grudgingly doled out, or still more grudgingly denied. We hear, at intervals, amidst all the dust and tumult of the city, the tinkling sound of distant music, with the accompaniment of a voice that might once have been sweet. We listen to a lively strain that should have echoed through stately halls, amongst marble pillars, and wreaths of flowers. The voice of the minstrel is strained beyond its natural pitch, but no ear will listen; it is modulated, but no heart is charmed. The discord of city sounds, the rattle of wheels, and the busy tread of many feet, carry away the sound, and the sweetness is lost. A plaintive lay comes next, but it is alike unavailable in moving the multitude; and the wretched minstrels wander on, a living exemplification of the impotence of music performed without appropriate feeling, persisted in without fitting accompaniments of time and place, and poured upon ungrateful and inattentive ears.

The cultivation of music as a science, clearly marks the progress of national civilization. In

almost all countries on the face of the earth, however simple or barbarous the state of their inhabitants, humble attempts to produce something like music have been detected, which proves beyond a doubt, that there is a natural faculty or feeling in the human mind that pines for this peculiar enjoyment. As the eye is gratified with the blending of different colours, so is the ear regaled with the harmony of different sounds. The general aspect of the external world, and the wonderful construction of the organ of sight, show how admirably they are adapted to each other; yet much is left to the ingenuity of man, that he may exercise his faculties in carrying on the same principle of intellectual enjoyment derived from nature, and diffusing it through the region of art. As relates to the eye, this is most effectually accomplished by painting; as relates to the ear, by music. They each constitute links of the same degree of relative connection between the organs of sense and the operations of the mind. Painting is generally considered more intellectual than music, because it remains extant and tangible to criticism; while music is more instantaneous, and more evanescent in its effect upon the feelings;

but they have both worked their way as an accompaniment in the progress of civilization and general refinement; they have both occupied the lives of many able men, requiring the exercise of much patience, and much intellect, to bring them to their present state of perfection; and they both afford pleasure, upon principles which form an important part of our nature, and are inseparable from it.

It is true there are human beings so strangely constituted, that deficient in no other faculty, they yet declare themselves incapable of being charmed by music; but rather than consign them at once to the well-known anathema against "the man that has not music in his soul," I have sometimes fancied that these individuals were influenced by prejudice, or early bias, against music in some particular character; that they might probably each have their favourite song bird, and that if they could once be convinced that the music to which they professed themselves insensible, was only a different arrangement of the same notes they were accustomed to listen to with delight from a bird, they would no longer turn away with indifference from the music of the harp or the

viol. There is one kind of music which, above all others, I would make the test of their capability—the music of the voices of children. If they remained unmoved by that, the case would be fully proved against them, and there would appear no reason why sentence should not be immediately pronounced, by declaring them

“Fit for treason’s stratagems and spoils.”

There is no sound that salutes us in our daily and familiar walk, more affecting than the voice of infancy in its happiest moods. It reminds us, with its fairy tones of silvery music, at once of what we are, and what we might have been ; of all that we have lost in losing our innocence, of the flowers that still linger upon the path of life, of the sweetness that may yet be extracted from affection and simplicity, from tenderness and truth ; and of the cherub choir that sing around the eternal throne.

The poetry of village sounds, when heard by the evening wanderer, scarcely needs description here. The clap of the distant gate, the bark of the faithful watch-dog, the bleat of the folded sheep, the faintly distinguished shout of

some victorious winner in the village game, the cry of the child under the evening discipline, and the hum of many voices, telling of the toils of the past, or of the coming day, are all poetical when they come floating upon the dewy air; though each in itself is discordant, and such as we should shun a nearer acquaintance with. Yet such is their intimate and powerful association with the calm of evening's hour, the close of labour, and the refreshment of repose, that heard in the distance they are mellowed into music, and thus become symbolical of happiness and peace.

As if to multiply our sources of enjoyment, and allure the mind onward from sensible to spiritual things, echo seems to have assumed her mysterious place in the great plan of creation. As shadow in the visible world is more productive of poetical association than objects which possess the qualities of substance, light, and colour, so is echo in the region of sound. It speaks to us in a language so faithful, yet so airy and spiritual in its tones, that we willingly adopt the fanciful conception of the poet, as the most natural and satisfactory manner of accounting for the existence of a being so sen-

sitive and ethereal, as to be perpetually speaking in the language of the woods and waterfalls, yet never seen, even for a moment, in the depth of the cool forest, listening to the melody of the winds, or stooping over the side of the crystal fountain to catch the silvery fall of its liquid music. How could a being of intelligence be made so faithful, but by love ; or so timid, but by suffering ? And from these two common circumstances of love and sorrow, the poet has drawn materials for that beautiful and fantastic story, of echo sighing herself away, until her whole existence became embodied in a sound—a sound of such exquisite but mysterious sweetness, wandering like a swift intelligence from hill to hill, from cave to mountain crag, from waterfall to woodland, that he must be destitute indeed of all pretension to poetic feeling, who can listen to the voice of echo without connecting it in idea with the language of unseen spirits.

As in the material world every visible object has its shadow, and every sound its echo, so in accordance with the great harmonious system of creation, no single idea is presented to the mind without its immediate affinity and con-

nection with others ; nor are we capable of any sensation, either^d painful or pleasurable, that does not owe half its weight and power to sympathy.

Such is the vital character of the principle of poetry, that touch but the simplest flower which blooms in our fields or our meadows, and the life-giving spell widens on every side, including in its charmed circle the dews, and the winds, light, form, and loveliness, the changes of the seasons, and an endless variety of associations, each having its own circle, widening also, and extending for ever without bound or limitation. Strike but a chord of music, and the sound is echoed and re-echoed, bearing the mind along with it, far, far away, into the regions of illimitable space ; examine but one atom extracted from the unfathomable abyss of past time, apply to it the torch of poetry, and a flame is kindled which lights up the past, the present, and the future, as with the golden radiance of an eternal and unextinguishable fire.

To speak of the poetry of one particular thing, is consequently like expatiating upon the sweetness of a single note of music. It is the combination and variety of these notes that

charm the ear ; just as it is the spirit of poetry pervading the natural world, extracting sweetness, and diffusing beauty, with the rapidity of thought, the power of intelligence, and the energy of truth, which constitutes the poetry of life.

THE POETRY OF LANGUAGE.

LANGUAGE as the medium of communication, has the same relation to the ear and the mind, as painting has to the mind and the eye. The poetry of language, like that of painting, consists in producing upon the organs of sense such impressions as are most intimately connected with refined and intellectual ideas; and it is to language that we appeal for the most forcible and obvious proofs that all our poetic feelings owe their existence to association.

The great principle therefore to be kept in view by the juvenile poet is the scale (or the *tone*, as the popular phrase now is) of his associations; and this is of importance not only as regards his subjects, but his words: for let the theme of his muse be the highest which the human mind is capable of conceiving, and the general style of his versification tender,

graceful, or sublime, the occasional occurrence of an ill-chosen word may so arrest the interest of the reader, by the sudden intervention of a different and inferior set of associations as entirely to destroy the charm of the whole.

Without noticing words individually, we are scarcely aware how much of their sense is derived from the relative ideas which custom has attached to them. Take for example the word *chariot*, and supply its place in any poetical passage with a one-horse chaise, or even a coach and six; and the hero who had been followed by the acclamations of a wondering people, immediately descends to the level of a common man, even while he travels more commodiously.

Dean Swift has a treatise on the "art of sinking in poetry," to which curious additions might be made by striking out any appropriate expression from a fine passage, and, without materially altering the sense, supplying its place with some vulgar, familiar, or otherwise ill-chosen word. For example,—

"Come forth, sweet spirit, from thy cloudy cave."

Come out, &c.

"But hark! through the fast flashing lightning of war,

"What steed of the desert flies frantic afar."

What steed of the desert *now gallops* afar.

"We shall hold in the air a communion divine."

We shall hold in the air *conversation* divine.

"Around my ivy'd porch shall spring

"Each fragrant flower that drinks the dew."

Each fragrant flower that *sups* the dew.

"To Bristol's fount I bore with trembling care

"Her faded form : she bow'd to taste the wave,

"And died."

She *stoop'd to sip* the wave.

"We thought as we hollowed his narrow bed,

"And smooth'd down his lonely pillow,

"That the foe and the stranger would tread o'er his head,

"And we far away on the billow."

We thought as we hollowed his *little* bed,

And *dug out* his lonely pillow,

That the foe and the stranger would *walk* o'er his head,

&c.

"Be strong as the ocean that stems

"A thousand wild waves on the shore."

Nine hundred wild waves on the shore.

"This life is all chequered with pleasures and woes."

This life is all *dappled*, &c.

There can scarcely be a more beautiful, and appropriate arrangement of words, than in the following stanza from Childe Harold.

"The sails were fill'd, and fair the light winds blew,

"As glad to waft him from his native home ;

"And fast the white rocks faded from his view,

"And soon were lost in circumambient foam :

"And then, it may be of his wish to roam

" Repented he, but in his bosom slept
 " The silent thought, nor from his lips did come
 " One word of wail, whilst others sate and wept,
 " And to the reckless gales unmanly moaning kept."

Without committing a crime so heinous as that of entirely spoiling this verse, it is easy to alter it so as bring it down to the level of ordinary composition ; and thus we may illustrate the essential difference between poetry and mere versification.

The sails were *trimm'd* and fair the light winds blew,
 As glad to *force* him from his native home,
 And fast the white rocks *vansh'd* from his view,
 And soon were lost *amid the circling* foam .
 And then, *perchance, of his fond wish* to roam
 Repented he, but in his bosom slept
 The *wish*, nor from his *silent* lips did come
 One *mournful word*, whilst others sat and wept,
 And to the *heedless breeze their fruitless* moaning kept.

It is impossible not to be struck with the harmony of the original words as they are placed in this stanza. The very sound is graceful, as well as musical ; like the motion of the winds and waves, blended with the majestic movement of a gallant ship. "The sails were filled" conveys no association with the work of man ; but substitute the word *trimmed*, and you see the busy sailors at once. The word "waft" follows in perfect unison with the whole

of the preceding line, and maintains the invisible agency of the "light winds;" while the word "glad" before it, gives an idea of their power as an unseen intelligence. "Fading" is also a happy expression, to denote the gradual obscurity and disappearing of the "white rocks;" but the "circumambient foam" is perhaps the most poetical expression of the whole, and such as could scarcely have proceeded from a low or ordinary mind. It is unnecessary however to prolong this minute examination of particular words. It may be more amusing to the reader to see how a poet, and that of no mean order, can undesignedly murder his own offspring.

TO LIBERTY, BY SHELLEY.

"From a single cloud the lightning flashes,
 "Whilst a thousand isles are illumin'd around,
 "Earthquake is *trampling* one city to ashes,
 * * * * *
 "But keener thy gaze than the lightning's glare,
 "And swifter thy step than the earthquake's tramp;
 "Thou deafenest the rage of the ocean; thy *stare*
 "Makes blind the volcanoes;————"

The images called up before the mind, by this personification of earthquake in the act of "trampling," and liberty "staring," are suffi-

"Repented he, but in his bosom slept
 "The silent thought, nor from his lips did come
 "One word of wail, whilst others sate and wept,
 "And to the reckless gales unmanly moaning kept."

Without committing a crime so heinous as that of entirely spoiling this verse, it is easy to alter it so as bring it down to the level of ordinary composition ; and thus we may illustrate the essential difference between poetry and mere versification.

The sails were *trimm'd* and fair the light winds blew,
 As glad to *force* him from his native home,
 And fast the white rocks *vanish'd* from his view,
 And soon were lost *amid the circling foam* .
 And then, *perchance, of his fond wish* to roam
 Repented he, but in his bosom slept
 The *wish*, nor from his *silent* lips did come
 One *mournful word*, whilst others sat and wept,
 And to the *heedless breeze their fruitless* moaning kept.

It is impossible not to be struck with the harmony of the original words as they are placed in this stanza. The very sound is graceful, as well as musical ; like the motion of the winds and waves, blended with the majestic movement of a gallant ship. "The sails were filled" conveys no association with the work of man ; but substitute the word *trimmed*, and you see the busy sailors at once. The word "waft" follows in perfect unison with the whole

of the preceding line, and maintains the invisible agency of the "light winds;" while the word "glad" before it, gives an idea of their power as an unseen intelligence. "Fading" is also a happy expression, to denote the gradual obscurity and disappearing of the "white rocks;" but the "circumambient foam" is perhaps the most poetical expression of the whole, and such as could scarcely have proceeded from a low or ordinary mind. It is unnecessary however to prolong this minute examination of particular words. It may be more amusing to the reader to see how a poet, and that of no mean order, can undesignedly murder his own offspring.

TO LIBERTY, BY SHELLEY.

"From a single cloud the lightning flashes,
 "Whilst a thousand isles are illumin'd around,
 "Earthquake is *trampling* one city to ashes,
 * * * * *
 "But keener thy gaze than the lightning's glare,
 "And swifter thy step than the earthquake's tramp;
 "Thou deafenest the rage of the ocean; thy STARE
 "Makes blind the volcanoes; —————"

The images called up before the mind, by this personification of earthquake in the act of "trampling," and liberty "staring," are suffi-

ciently absurd to destroy the sublimity of the poem.

To ———.

“ Music, when soft voices die,
 “ Vibrates in the memory—
 “ Odours, when sweet violets *sicken*,
 “ Live within the sense they quicken.”

A DIRGE.

* * * * *

“ Ere the sun through heaven once more has rolled,
 “ The *rats* in her heart
 “ Will have made their nest,
 “ And the worms be alive in her golden hair.”

SONG FOR TASSO.

* * * * *

“ And if I think, my thoughts come fast,
 “ I mix the present with the past,
 “ And each seems *ugher* than the last.”

ODE TO NAPLES.

“ Naples ! thou heart of men, which ever pantest
 “ Naked, beneath the *hdless* eye of heaven !”

The same fault, as it applies to imagery rather than to single words, is still more frequently found in poetry, because the ear assists the judgment in its choice of words, but imagery is left entirely to the imagination. The same poet, rich as he is in passages of beauty, must still supply us with examples.

A FRAGMENT.

"Thou art the *wine* whose *drunkenness* is all
"We can desire, O Love!"

A VISION OF THE SEA.

"'Tis the terror of tempest. The *rags* of the sail
"Are flickering in ribbons within the fierce gale:
"From the stark night of vapours the dim rain is driven,
"And when lightning is loosed, like a deluge from heaven,
"*She sees the black trunks of the water-spout spin,*
"And bend as if heaven was raining in."

THE FUGITIVES.

"In the court of the fortress
"Beside the pale portress,
"Like a blood-hound well beaten,
"The bridegroom stands, eaten
"By shame "

THE SUNSET.

"For but to see her were to read the tale
"Woven by some subtlest bard, to make hard hearts
"Dissolve away in wisdom-working grief;—
"*Her eyelashes were worn away with tears.*"

THE BOAT ON THE SERCHIO.

"Our boat is asleep on the Serchio's stream,
"Its sails are folded like thoughts in a dream,
"The helm sways idly, hither and thither;
"Dominic, the boatman, has brought the mast,
"And the oar and the sails; but 'tis sleeping fast,
"*Like a beast unconscious of its tether.*"

A vulgar proverb tells us that "seeing is

believing ;" and it is quite necessary to see, in order to believe, that the same poet who wrote that exquisite line,

"Its sails are folded like thoughts in a dream."

should go on to tell us in the language of poetry, that

"Dominic, the boatman, has brought the mast,"

and that the boat itself

"is sleeping fast,

"Like a beast unconscious of its tether."

The same poet has addressed himself to night, in language seldom surpassed for sublimity and grace ; but even here he calls up one image which spoils the whole.

"Wrap thy form in a mantle grey,

"Star inwrought !

"Bind with thine hair the eyes of day,

"Kiss her until she be wearied out,

"Then wander o'er city, and sea, and land,

"Touching all with thine opiate wand—

"Come, long sought !"

LINES ON HEARING THE NEWS OF THE DEATH
 OF NAPOLEON.

* * * * *

"And livest thou still, mother earth ?

"Thou wert warming thy fingers old

"O'er the embers covered and cold

"Of that most fiery spirit, when it fled——."

It is an ungracious task to busy one's fingers in turning over the pages of our best writers, for the purpose of finding out their faults, or rather detecting instances of their forgetfulness ; yet if any thing of this kind can assist the young poet in his pursuit of excellence, it ought not to be withheld ; especially as it can in no way affect the decided merits of those who have so few flaws in their title to our admiration.

“ What behold I now ? (says Young,)
“ A wilderness of wonders burning round ;
“ Where larger suns inhabit higher spheres ;
“ Perhaps the *villas* of descending Gods.
“ Nor halt I here ; my toil is but begun ;
“ 'Tis but the threshold of the Deity.”

¶

The idea of “descending gods” requiring “villas,” or half-way houses to halt at, is wholly unworthy of the dignity of the author of “Night Thoughts.”

It is remarkable that Milton, whose choice of subjects would have rendered an inferior poet peculiarly liable to such errors, has a few, and but a very few, instances of the same kind.

“ And now went forth the moon,
“ Such as in highest heaven, arrayed with gold
“ Empyrean ; from before her vanished night,
“ *Shot through* with orient beams.”

Through the whole of the works of this master mind, the passage which describes the combat between Satan and the Archangel, is perhaps the most in danger of falling into burlesque; and even this has great sublimity and power: but the subject itself—a fleshly combat in the air, is one which necessarily requires such descriptions and allusions as we find it difficult to reconcile with our notions of ethereal or sublime. For instance, when

“From each hand with speed retired,
“Where erst was thickest fight, the angelic throng,
“And left large *field, unsafe within the wind*
“*Of such commotion.*”

And again, when the sword of Michael “shares all the right side of his antagonist,” and

“A stream of nectareous humour issuing flowed
“Sanguine, such as celestial spirits may bleed.”

This, and the minute description of the process by which the wound is healed, have little connection with our ideas of the essential attributes of gods. Nor is there much dignity in the allusion made by Adam to his own situation after the fall, compared with that of Eve.

—————"On me the curse *aslope*
"Glanced on the ground; with labour I must earn
"My bread."

But above all, in describing the building of the tower of Babel, our immortal poet seems wholly to have forgotten the necessary difference between the inhabitants of Earth, and those of Heaven.

"Forthwith a hideous gabble rises loud
"Among the builders; each to other calls
"Not understood; till hoarse, and all in rage,
"As mocked they storm; *great laughter was in heaven*
"And looking down, to see the hubbub strange,
"And hear the din."—

It is into such incongruities as these, that young poets and enthusiasts, whether young or old, are most apt to fall: young poets, because they are not so well acquainted with the world, and with the tastes and feelings of mankind in general, as to know what particular associations are most uniformly attached to certain words; and enthusiasts, because their own thoughts are too vivid, and the tide of their own feelings too violent and impetuous, to admit of interruption from a single word, or even a whole sentence; and forgetting the fact that their books will be read with cool discrimination rather than with enthusiasm like their own,

they dash forth in loose and anomalous expressions, which destroy the harmony, and weaken the force of their language.

The introduction of unpoetical images may however be pardoned on the score of inadvertency, but it is possible for such images to be introduced in a manner which almost insults the feelings of the reader, by the doggrel or burlesque style which obtains favour with a certain class of readers, chiefly such as are incapable of appreciating what is beautiful or sublime. One specimen of this kind will be sufficient. It occurs in a volume of American poetry.

“ There’s music in the dash of waves
 “ When the swift bark cleaves the foam ;
 “ There’s music heard upon her deck,
 “ The mariner’s song of home.
 “ When moon and star-beams smiling meet
 “ At midnight on the sea—
 “ *And there is music once a week*
 “ *In Scudder’s balcony.*”

* * * * *

“ The moonlight music of the waves
 “ In storms is heard no more,
 “ When the living lightning mocks the wreck
 “ At midnight on the shore ;
 “ And the mariner’s song of home has ceased ;
 “ His course is on the sea—
 “ *And there is music when it rains*
 “ *In Scudder’s balcony.*”

What could induce the poet to spoil his otherwise pretty verses in this manner, it is difficult to imagine; but as this is by no means a solitary instance of the kind, we are led to suppose that the minds in which such incongruities originate, must be influenced by the popular notion of imitating Lord Byron, in the wild vagaries which even his genius could scarcely render endurable. What his genius might have failed to reconcile to the taste of the public, was however sufficiently effected, by the proofs we find throughout his writings, of the agony of a distorted mind, of that worst and deepest of all maladies, which hides its internal convulsions under the mask of humour, and throws around, in lurid flashes of wit and drollery, the burning ebullitions of a frenzied brain. There is a depth of experience, and bitterness of feeling, in the playful starts of familiar commonplace with which he forcibly arrests the tide of his own tenderness, or "turns to burlesque" his own elevated sentiments, which sets all imitation at defiance; and might, if properly felt and fully understood, serve as a warning to those who aspire to be poets in the style of Byron, that to imitate his eccentricities without the power of his genius, and

they dash forth in loose and anomalous expressions, which destroy the harmony, and weaken the force of their language.

The introduction of unpoetical images may however be pardoned on the score of inadvertency, but it is possible for such images to be introduced in a manner which almost insults the feelings of the reader, by the doggrel or burlesque style which obtains favour with a certain class of readers, chiefly such as are incapable of appreciating what is beautiful or sublime. One specimen of this kind will be sufficient. It occurs in a volume of American poetry.

"There's music in the dash of waves
 "When the swift bark cleaves the foam;
 "There's music heard upon her deck,
 "The mariner's song of home.
 "When moon and star-beams smiling meet
 "At midnight on the sea—
 "*And there is music once a week*
 "*In Scudder's balcony."*

* * * * *

"The moonlight music of the waves
 "In storms is heard no more,
 "When the living lightning mocks the wreck
 "At midnight on the shore;
 "And the mariner's song of home has ceased;
 "His course is on the sea—
 "*And there is music when it rains*
 "*In Scudder's balcony."*

What could induce the poet to spoil his otherwise pretty verses in this manner, it is difficult to imagine; but as this is by no means a solitary instance of the kind, we are led to suppose that the minds in which such incongruities originate, must be influenced by the popular notion of imitating Lord Byron, in the wild vagaries which even his genius could scarcely render endurable. What his genius might have failed to reconcile to the taste of the public, was however sufficiently effected, by the proofs we find throughout his writings, of the agony of a distorted mind, of that worst and deepest of all maladies, which hides its internal convulsions under the mask of humour, and throws around, in lurid flashes of wit and drollery, the burning ebullitions of a frenzied brain. There is a depth of experience, and bitterness of feeling, in the playful starts of familiar commonplace with which he forcibly arrests the tide of his own tenderness, or "turns to burlesque" his own elevated sentiments, which sets all imitation at defiance; and might, if properly felt and fully understood, serve as a warning to those who aspire to be poets in the style of Byron, that to imitate his eccentricities without the power of his genius, and

the pathos of his soul, is as obviously at variance with good taste, natural feeling, and common sense, as to attempt to interest by aping the frolic of the madman, without the deep-seated and burning passions that have overthrown his reason.

Another prevailing fault in poetry, as intimately connected with association as the foregoing, is the introduction of words or passages, in which the ideas connected with them are too numerous, or too remote from common feeling and common observation, for the attention to travel with the same rapidity as the eye. Under such circumstances the mind must either pause and examine for itself, or pass over the expression as an absolute blank ; in either of which cases, the chain of interest and intelligence is broken, and the reader is either wearied, or uninformed as to the meaning of the writer.

The same poet who has afforded us so many instances of his own faults, will serve our purpose again.

“ the whirl and the splash
“ As of some hideous engine, whose brazen teeth smash
“ The thin winds and soft waves into thunder ; the screams
“ And hissings crawl fast o’er the smooth ocean streams,
“ Each sound like a centipede.”

Descriptions such as this, are beyond the power of the most vivid imagination to convert into an ideal *scene*: all is confusion, because the mind no sooner forms one picture, than other objects, differently coloured, are forced upon it, and consequently the whole is indefinite and obscure.

Again, in the Song of a Spirit—

“ And as a veil in which I walk through heaven,
 “ I have wrought mountains, seas, and waves, and clouds,
 “ And lastly, light, *whose interfusion dawns*
 “ *In the dark space of interstellar air.*”

Milton is by no means free from this fault. Witness his frequent crowding together of appellations, which even the most learned readers must pause before they can properly apply, as well as passages like the following, with which his works abound.

“ There let him victor sway,
 “ As battle hath adjudged, from this new world
 “ Retiring, by his own doom alienated;
 “ And henceforth monarchy with thee divide
 “ Of all things parted *by the empyreal bounds*,
 “ *His quadrature, from thy orbicular world*;
 “ Or try thee, now more dangerous to his throne.”

But of all our poets, Young is perhaps the most liberal in bestowing upon his readers ex-

amples of this kind. His ideas are absolutely ponderous. His associations crowd upon us in such stupendous masses, that we are often burdened and fatigued, instead of being refreshed and delighted with his otherwise sublime, and always imaginative style.

The poetry of language consists, therefore, not only of words which are musical, harmonious, and agreeable in themselves, but of *appropriate* words, so arranged as that their relative ideas shall flow into the mind, without more exertion of its own; than results from a gentle and natural stimulus. That quality in poetry which is most essentially conducive to this effect, is simplicity; and perhaps, from the humble ideas we attach to the word, simplicity is too much despised by those who are unacquainted with its real power and value. Yet is there nothing more obvious, upon reflection, than the simplicity of the language of some of our best poets. We feel that it is only from not having been the first to think of it, that we have not used precisely the same language ourselves. It contains nothing apparently beyond our own reach and compass. The words which terminate the lines seem to have fallen naturally and without design into their

proper places ; and the metre flows in like the consequence of an impulse, rather than an effort. Simplicity in poetry, when the subject is well chosen and skilfully managed, like order in architecture, where the materials and workmanship are good, establishes a complete whole, which never fails to please, not only the scientific observer, but even those who are least acquainted with the principles from which their gratification arises.

Our business thus far has been to point out what is not poetical in language ; and so far as it serves to establish the fact, that the poetry of language, as well as that of feeling, arises from association, the task can scarcely be altogether uninteresting : but that which now lies before us is one of a much more grateful character.

We are told by Blair, that it is an essential part of the harmony (and consequently of the *poetry*) of language, that a particular resemblance should be maintained between the object described, and the sounds employed in describing it ; and of this we give practical illustrations in our common conversation, when we speak of the *whistling* of winds, the *buz* and *hum* of insects, the *hiss* of serpents, the *crash* of falling timber, and many other instances,

where the word has been plainly framed upon the sound it represents.

Pope also tells us, in his Poetical Essay on Criticism,

“ ’Tis not enough no harshness gives offence ;
 “ The sound must seem an echo to the sense.
 “ Soft is the strain when Zephyr gently blows,
 “ And the smooth stream in smoother numbers flows ;
 “ But when loud surges lash the sounding shore,
 “ The hoarse rough verse should like the torrent roar.”

And faithful to his own maxims, he thus describes the felling of trees in a forest :

“ Loud sounds the air, redoubling stroke on strokes,
 “ On all sides round the forest hurls her oaks
 “ Headlong. Deep echoing groan the thickets brown,
 “ Then rustling, crackling, crashing, thunder down.”

The words *alone, gone, no more*, are peculiarly adapted by their sound to the lengthened and melancholy cadence with which they are generally uttered ; and *quick, lively, frolic, fun*, are equally expressive of what they describe. Of the same character are the following examples :—*whirring* of the partridge—*booming* of the bittern, &c.

“ Scarce
 “ The bittern knows his time, with bill ingulft
 “ To shake the sounding marsh.”

THE HORSE DRINKING IN SUMMER.

" He takes the river at redoubled draughts,
 " And with wide nostrils, snorting, skims the wave."

STORM IN SUMMER.

" The tempest growls———
 ————" Rolls its awful burden on the wind.

* * * * *

" Follows the loosen'd aggravated roar,
 " Enlarging, deepening, mingling; peal on peal
 " Crush'd horrible, convulsing heaven and earth.
 " Down comes a deluge of sonorous hail,
 " Or prone descending rain."

ON WINTER.

" At last the rous'd-up river pours along,
 " Resistless, roaring, dreadful, down it comes," &c.
 " Tumbling thro' rocks abrupt," &c.

" I hear the far-off curfew sound
 " Over some wide water'd shore,
 " Swinging slow with sullen roar."

" The reeling clouds
 " Stagger with dizzy poise."—THOMSON.

" Have you not made an universal shout,
 " That Tyber trembled underneath his banks,
 " To hear the replication of your sounds,
 " Made in his concave shores?"—SHAKESPEARE.

But above all our poets, he who sung in darkness most deeply felt and studied the harmony of his versification. Shut out from the visible world, his very soul seemed wrapped in music, and confined to that one medium of

intelligence, through it he received as well as imparted, the most exquisite delight. Witness his own expression,—

“ to
 “ Feed on thoughts, that voluntary move
 “ Harmonious numbers.”
 “ The multitude of angels, with a shout
 “ Loud as from numbers without number.”

“ The harp
 “ Had work and rested not, the solemn pipe,
 “ And dulcimer, all organs of sweet stop,
 “ All sounds on flet by string or golden wire,
 “ Temper’d soft tunings,” &c.

The contrast between the two following passages, displays to great advantage the poet’s art.

“ On a sudden, open fly,
 “ With impetuous recoil, and jarring sound,
 “ Th’ infernal doors ; and on their hinges grate
 “ Harsh thunder.”

“ Heaven opened wide
 “ Her ever-during gates, harmonious sound,
 “ On golden hinges turning.”

And again,—

“ When the merry bells ring round,
 “ And the jocund rebecks sound,
 “ To many a youth, and many a maid
 “ Dancing in the chequer’d shade.”
 “ Fountains, and ye that warble as ye flow
 “ Melodious murmurs, warbling, tune his praise.”

“ Now gentle gales,
“ Fanning their odoriferous wings, dispense
“ Native perfumes, and whisper whence they stole
“ Those balmy spoils.”

“ Tripping ebb, that stole
“ With soft foot toward the deep,” &c.

“ Sabrina fair,
“ Listen where thou art sitting
“ Under the glassy, cool, translucent wave.”

“ At last a soft and solemn breathing sound
“ Rose like a steam of rich distilled perfumes,
“ And stole upon the air, that even silence
“ Was took ere she was ware, and wished she might
“ Deny her nature, and be never more
“ Still to be so displaced.”

“ How sweetly did they float upon the wings
“ Of silence, through the empty vaulted night,
“ At every fall smoothing the raven down
“ Of darkness till it smiled.”

“ Midnight shout and revelry,
“ Tipsy dance and jollity.”

“ The sun to me is dark
“ And silent as the moon,
“ When she deserts the night,
“ Hid in her vacant interlunar cave.”—MILTON.

The measure of the following two lines is remarkably descriptive of the tardy leave-taking of our first parents, when they passed for the last time through the gates of Paradise.

“ They ~~hand~~ in hand, with wandering steps and slow.
“ Through Eden took their solitary way.”

How bright and crystalline is the following description :

"How from the sapphire fount, the crisped brook,
 "Rolling on orient pearl, and sands of gold,
 "With mazy error, under pendent shades."

The following specimens, from different authors, are all illustrative of the harmony of numbers.

"How beautiful is night !
 "A dewy freshness fills the silent air ;
 "No mist obscures, nor cloud, nor speck, nor stain
 "Breaks the serene of heaven :
 "In full orb'd glory yonder moon divine
 "Rolls through the dark blue depths.
 "Beneath her steady ray
 "The desert circle spreads,
 "Like a round ocean girded with the sky.
 "How beautiful is night !" —SOUTHEY.

"From peak to peak the rattling crags among,
 "Leaps the live thunder !"

"And first one universal shriek there rush'd,
 "Louder than the loud ocean, like a crash
 "Of echoing thunder ; and then all was hush'd,
 "Save the wild wind, and the remorseless dash
 "Of billows : but at intervals there gush'd,
 "Accompanied with a convulsive splash
 "A solitary shriek, the bubbling cry
 "Of some strong swimmer in his agony." —BYRON.

"And dashing soft from rocks around,
 "Bubbling runnels join'd the sound." —COLLINS.

"That orb'd maiden with white fire laden
"Whom mortals call the moon,
"Glides glimmering o'er my fleece-like floor
"By the midnight breezes strewn."—SHELLEY.

"Sad, on the solitude of night, the sound,
"As in the stream he plung'd, was heard around :
"Then all was still,—the wave was rough no more,
"The river swept as sweetly as before,
"The willows wav'd, the moonbeams shone serene.
"And peace returning brooded o'er the scene."

H. K. WHITE.

Gray is scarcely inferior to Milton in his musical versification ; indeed so much less important are the subjects of his muse, and consequently so much more easily woven in with soft and musical words, that as regards mere versification he stands unrivalled in the literature of our country.

"Now the rich stream of music winds along,
"Deep, majestic, smooth, and strong."
"Woods that wave o'er Delphi's steep,
"Isles, that crown th' Egean deep,
"Fields that cool Ilissus laves."
"Bright-eyed fancy, hov'ring o'er,
"Scatters from her pictured urn
"Thoughts that breathe, and words that burn."
"Fair laughs the morn, and soft the zephyr blows,
"While proudly riding o'er the azure realm
"In gallant trim the gilded vessel goes ;
"Youth on the prow, and pleasure at the helm ;

“ Regardless of the sweeping whirlwind’s sway,
“ That, hush’d in grim repose, expects his evening prey ”
“ Bright rapture calls, and soaring, as she sings,
“ Waves in the eye of heaven her many-colour’d wings.”
“ Now the storm begins to lour,
“ (Haste, the loom of hell prepare,)
“ *Iron sleet of arrowy shower*
“ *Hurtles in the darkened air.*”
“ Now my weary lips I close
“ Leave me, leave me to repose.”

Nothing can be more expressive of weariness than the simple words which compose these two lines. We could scarcely find in our hearts to detain the enchantress who utters them more than once, even were she capable of realizing to our grasp the imaginary dominion of a world.

The elegy written in a country church-yard is altogether the most perfect specimen of poetical harmony which our language affords ; but like some other good things it has been profaned by vulgar abuse, and many who have been compelled to learn these verses for a task at school, retain in after life a clear recollection of their sound, without any idea of their sense, or any perception of their beauty. Still this elegy contains many stanzas, and one in par-

ticular, to which the ear must be insensible indeed if it can listen without delight.

“The breezy call of incense-breathing moru,

“The swallow twitt’ring from the straw-built shed,

“The cock’s shrill clarion, or the echoing horn,

“No more shall rouse them from their lowly bed.”

Amongst our modern poets, there is not one who possesses a more exquisite sense of the appropriateness of sound and imagery, than Moore. His charmed numbers flow on like the free current of a melodious stream, whose associations are with the sunbeams and the shadows, the leafy boughs, the song of the forest birds, the dew upon the flowery bank, and all things sweet, and genial, and delightful, whose influence is around us in our happiest moments, and whose essence is the wealth that lies hoarded in the treasury of nature. In reading the poetry of Moore, our attention is never arrested by one particular word. His syllables are like notes of music, each composing parts of an harmonious whole; and the interest they excite, divided between the ear and the mind, is a continued tide of gratification, gently but copiously poured in upon the soul. There is scarcely a line of his that would not gratify us by its sound, even were

we ignorant of its sense ; but the perfect correspondence between both is what constitutes the soul-felt music of his lyre.

It would be as useless to select passages from what is altogether harmonious, as to point out particular parts in a chain of beauty, whose every link is perfect ; but from an almost affectionate remembrance of the delight with which they first struck upon my youthful ear, I am tempted to quote a few examples powerfully illustrative of the poetry of language.

“ Oh ! had we some bright little isle of our own,
“ *In a blue summer ocean far off and alone.*”

“ *Not the silvery lapse of the summer eve dew.*”

“ I saw from the beach, when the morning was shining,
“ A bark o’er the waters move gloriously on ;
“ I came when the sun o’er that beach was declining,
“ The bark was still there, but the waters were gone.”

“ There’s a bower of roses by Bendemeer’s stream,
“ And the nightingale sings round it all the day long ;
“ In the time of my childhood ’twas like a sweet dream,
“ To sit in the roses and hear the bird’s song.”

What a picture of innocent enjoyment is here ! A picture whose vividness and beauty are recalled in after life as light and colouring only—whose reality is gone with the innocence which gave it birth.

In the poet's farewell to his harp, the last two lines are exquisitely poetical :

- “ If the pulse of the patriot, soldier, or lover,
 “ Have throb'd at our lay, 'tis thy glory alone ;
“ I was but as the wind passing heedlessly over,
“ And all the wild sweetness I wak'd was thy own ”

A few more passages, quoted at random and without comment, will sufficiently illustrate what is meant by embodying in appropriate words, ideas which are purely poetical.

- “ So fiercely beautiful, in form and eye,
“ Like war's wild planet in a summer sky.”

- “ who with heart and eyes
 “ Could walk where liberty had been, nor see
“ The shining foot-prints of her Deity ”

- “ But ill-according with the pomp and grace.
“ And silent lull of that voluptuous place.”

- “ and gave
 “ His soul up to sweet thoughts, like wave on wave
 “ Succeeding in smooth seas, when storms are laid ”

- “ still nearer on the breeze,
“ Come those delicious dream-like harmonies.—”

- “ Awhile they dance before him, then divide,
 “ Breaking like rosy clouds at eventide
 “ Around the rich pavilion of the sun——”

- “ 'Tis moonlight over Oman's sea ;
 “ Her banks of pearl and palmy isles
 “ Bask in the night-beam beautifully,
 “ And her blue waters sleep in smiles.”

"To watch the moonlight on the wings
 "Of the white pelicans, that break
 "The azure calm of *Mæris' lake*."

"when the west
 "Opens her golden bowers of rest."

"Our rocks are rough, but smiling there,
 "Th' acacia waves her yellow hair,
 "Lonely and sweet, nor lov'd the less,
 "For flowing in a wilderness.
 "Our sands are rude, but down their slope,
 "The silvery-footed antelope
 "As gracefully and gaily springs,
 "As o'er the marble courts of kings."

Nor is the prose of this *delicious* bard less musical than his verse. The very cadence of his sentences would charm us, independent of their meaning, were it possible to listen without understanding; but his choice of words is such, that their mere sound conveys no small portion of their sense.

"Seldom, indeed, had Athens witnessed such a scene. The ground that formed the original site of the garden had, from time to time, received continual additions, and the whole extent was laid out with that perfect taste, which knows how to wed *Nature with Art*, without sacrificing her *simplicity to the alliance*. Walks, leading through wildernesses of shade and fragrance—glades opening, as if to afford a play-ground for the sunshine—temples, rising on the very spots where imagination herself would have called them up, and fountains and lakes, in alternate motion and repose, either wantonly courting the verdure, or calmly sleeping in

its embrace—such was the variety of feature that diversified these fair gardens; and, animated as they were on this occasion, by the living wit and loveliness of Athens, it afforded a scene such as my own youthful fancy, rich as it was then in images of luxury and beauty, could hardly have anticipated.

“ For, shut out, as I was by my creed, from a future life, and having no hope beyond the narrow horizon of this, every minute of delight assumed a mournful preciousness in my eyes, *and pleasure, like the flower of the cemetery, grew but more luxuriant from the neighbourhood of death.*”

“ Every where new pleasures, new interests awaited me; and though melancholy, as usual, stood always near, her shadow fell but half way over my vagrant path, and left the rest more welcomely brilliant from the contrast.”

“ Through a range of sepulchral grots underneath. the humbler denizens of the tomb are deposited,—looking out on each successive generation that visits them, with the same face and features they wore centuries ago. *Every plant and tree that is consecrated to death, from the asphodel flower to the mystic plaintain, lends its sweetness or shadow to this place of tombs; and the only noise that disturbs its eternal calm, is the low humming sound of the priests at prayer, when a new inhabitant is added to the silent city.*”

“ The activity of the morning hour was visible every where. Flights of doves and lapwings were fluttering among the leaves, and the white heron, which had been roosting all night in some date tree, now stood sunning its wings on the green bank, or floated, like living silver, over the flood. The flowers, too, both of land and water, looked freshly awakened; —and, *most of all, the superb lotus, which had risen with the sun from the wave, and was now holding up her chalice for a full draught of his light.*”

“ To attempt to repeat, in her own touching words, the simple story which she now related to me, would be like endeavouring to note down some strain of unpremeditated music, with those fugitive graces, those felicities of the moment, which no art can restore, as they first met the ear.”

“ The only living thing I saw was a restless swallow, whose wings were of the hue of the grey sands over which he fluttered. “ Why (thought I) may not the mind, like this bird, take the colour of the desert, *and sympathise in its austerity, its freedom, and its calm.*”

It would scarcely be possible to exchange any one word in the writings of Moore for another more fitting or appropriate, nor can the young poet be too often reminded that it is *appropriateness* rather than uniform elevation of diction which he has to keep in view. There are certain kinds of metre to which peculiar expressions are adapted—expressions which even if the subject were the same, would be extremely out of place elsewhere ; and here again Moore is pre-eminent for the skill with which he maintains (if we may so call it) the *proportions* of his verse, by keeping the familiar and playful language with which he sports like a child with his rainbow-tinted bubbles, always in their proper degree of subordination ; so that they never break in upon the pathos of a sentiment, or check the flow of elevated thought.

Lines on the burial of Sir John Moore afford a beautiful instance of what may be called *tact* in the choice and application of words. It is not the splendour of an excited imagination flashing upon us as we read these lines, which constitutes their fascination; but the entire appropriateness of the words, and the metre, to the scene described. Simple as these verses are throughout—simple almost as the language of a child, and therefore to be felt and understood by the meanest capacity, they yet convey ideas of silence, solemnity, and power, such as especially belong to the hour of night, the awful nature of death, and the indignant spirit of the unconquered warrior.

Beyond the mere appropriateness of words, poetical language affords a deeper interest, in those rapid combinations of thought and feeling which a few words may convey, by introducing in descriptions of present things allusions to those which are remote, and which from being easily and naturally presented to the mind of the reader, glide in like the shadow of a passing cloud upon the landscape, without obscuring our view, or interrupting our contemplation of the scene.

Crabbe, who is by no means remarkable for the harmony of his numbers, abounds in passages of this kind ; and it is to them that we are mainly indebted for the interest, as well as the power of his poetry. The first instance which occurs to me, is in the introduction to the sad story of the smugglers, and poachers—a story almost unrivalled for the natural and touching pathos with which it is described.

“ One day is like the past, the year’s sweet prime
“ Like the sad fall,—for Rachel heeds not time :
“ Nothing remains to agitate her breast,
“ Spent is the tempest, and the sky at rest ;
“ But while it raged her peace its ruin met,
“ And now the sun is on her prospects set ;
“ Leave her, and let us her distress explore,
“ *She heeds it not—she has been left before.*”

Here is the story of the sufferer, told at once by a sudden transition from the description of her settled grief, to that which had been the bane of her past life—its melancholy cause. Yet the chain of association so far from being broken acquires tenfold interest from the transition of thought, and we hasten on to learn the particular history of this lonely being, who has experienced the most melancholy fate of woman—that of being “left.”

Again, towards the conclusion of the same story, when Rachel finds the dead body of her lover, and, as if incapable of comprehending any further grief, takes no note of the intelligence that her husband is dead also.

“ But see, the woman creeps
 “ Like a lost thing, that wanders as she sleeps.
 “ See here her husband’s body—but she knows
 “ That other dead ! and that her action shews.
 “ Rachel ! why look you at your mortal foe ?
 “ *She does not hear us—whither will she go ?* ”

Here we have three distinct ideas, not necessarily connected with each other, presented to us in quick succession, without any interruption to the interest excited by each individually. First, we see the dead body of the husband, and then “that other dead,” with the total abstraction of the mourner, who in her silent grief sees only one, and this proves the strength of her affection, which life might have subdued, but which death reveals in all its overwhelming power : then follows the simple query, “whither will she go ?” presenting us at once with a view of her future life, and its utter desolation.

Moore has many passages of the same description :—

“ Here too he traces the kind visitings
“ Of woman’s love, in those fair, living things
“ Of land and wave, whose fate,—in bondage thrown
“ *For their weak loveliness—is like her own.*”

The reader may, without any flaw in the chain of association, pause here to give one sigh to the fate of woman, and then go on with the poet while he proceeds to describe other fair things, amongst which the stranger was wandering.

There is somewhere in the writings of Wordsworth a highly poetical passage, equally illustrative of the subject in question. It is where he describes a mourner whose grief has all the bitterness of self-condemnation :—

“ It was the season sweet of budding leaves,
“ Of days advancing towards their utmost length,
“ And small birds singing to their happy mates.
“ Wild is the music of the autumnal wind
“ Amongst the faded woods ; but these blythe notes
“ Strike the deserted to the heart ;—*I speak*
“ *Of what I know, and what we feel within.*”

When he leaves the subject which he has so beautifully described, to attest by his own ex-

perience, and by his knowledge of human nature, the truth of what he has asserted, our thoughts are not diverted from the original theme, but our feelings are riveted more closely to it by the force of this attestation, which meets with an immediate response from every human bosom.

In Gray's description of Milton, where he says :—

“ The living throne, the sapphire blaze,
 “ Where angels tremble while they gaze,
 “ *He saw, but, blasted with excess of light,*
 “ *Clos'd his eyes in endless night.*”

The transition is immediate from what the poet saw, to what he suffered; yet the associations are highly poetical, and so clear as in no way to interfere with each other.

It is related of the Emperor Nero, when in the last mental agonies of his wretched life, he sought from others the death he shuddered to inflict upon himself, that finding none who heeded his appeal, he pathetically exclaimed, “What! have I neither a friend nor an enemy?” Although no man could possibly be thinking less of poetry than the fallen monarch at that moment, yet such is the lan-

guage which an able poet would have used, to express the three separate ideas of the helplessness of Nero's situation, his pitiful appeal to the kindness of his people, and his internal consciousness that if he had not a friend, he had at least done enough to deserve the stroke of an enemy in his last hour.

Personification is another figure of speech by which poetical associations are powerfully conveyed. It seems to be peculiarly in accordance with the infant mind—infant either in experience or in civilization, to identify every thing possessed of substance, motion, form, or power, with an intelligence of its own; hence the strong disposition shewn by children to revenge themselves upon whatever has given them pain, and to battle, however vainly, with all that obstructs the gratification of their wishes; and hence those bursts of figurative language with which semi-barbarous people are accustomed to express what they deeply feel. As if to accommodate themselves to the natural tastes and feelings of mankind, originating in the principles of our nature, all good poets have made frequent use of this style, and always, when it is well managed, with great effect. How beau-

tiful is the following passage from Barry Cornwall, where he speaks of the wind murmuring through the pine trees on mount Pelion :—

“ And Pelion shook his piny locks, and talked
“ Mournfully to the fields of Thessaly.”

Shakespeare abounds in examples of this kind, in no one instance more touching or powerful than in the lament of Constance, after the French king tells her she is as fond of grief as of her child :—

“ Grief fills the room up of my absent child,
“ Lies in his bed, walks up and down with me ;
“ Puts on his pretty looks, repeats his words,
“ Remembers me of all his gracious parts,
“ Stuffs out his vacant garments with his form ;
“ Then have I reason to be fond of grief.”

The following example from Cowper is remarkable for its elegance and beauty. Alluding to the lemon and the orange trees—

“ The golden boast of Portugal and Western India,”

he says, they

“ Peep through the polished foliage at the storm,
“ And seem to smile at what they need not fear.”

The next figure of speech noticed by Blair is metaphor, of immense importance to the

poet, because, if for one moment he loses the chain of association, an image wholly out of place is introduced, the charm of his metaphor is destroyed, and his verse becomes contemptible. From Lord Bolingbroke, whose writings abound in beauties of this kind, Blair has selected one example of perfect metaphor. The writer is describing the behaviour of Charles the First to his parliament. "In a word," says he, "about a month after their meeting, he dissolved them; and, as soon as he had dissolved them, he repented; but he repented too late of his rashness. Well might he repent, *for the vessel was now full, and this last drop made the waters of bitterness overflow.*"

The works of Ossian abound with beautiful and correct metaphors; such as that on a hero: "In peace, thou-art the gate of spring; in war, the mountain storm." Or this on woman: "She was covered with the light of beauty; but her heart was the house of pride."

Young, in speaking of old age, says,

"It should

"Walk thoughtful on the silent solemn shore

"Of that vast ocean it must sail so soon."

In the following lines Prior gives us an ex-

ample of allegory, which may be regarded as continued metaphor.

“ Did I but purpose to embark with thee
“ On the smooth surface of a summer’s sea,
“ While gentle zephyrs blow with prosperous gales,
“ And fortune’s favour fills the swelling sails,
“ But would forsake the ship, and make the shore,
“ When the winds whistle and the tempests roar?”

Beyond these figures of speech, there yet remain hyperbole, apostrophe, comparison, and a variety of others, which the young poet would do well to study, and which are scientifically described in books expressly devoted to the purpose; I shall therefore pass on to the colloquial language of the Irish—the simple, unsophisticated, genuine Irish, which has always appeared to me particularly imaginative, powerful and pathetic; but unfortunately for the writer, it is only heard in moments of excitement, of which the feelings alone keep a record, and this record being one of impressions rather than words, it is difficult to recall the precise expressions which, striking the chords of sympathy, produce a momentary echo to the music of the soul.

Mrs. C. Hall, in an Irish story, illustrative of the strong and metaphorical language of

the Irish peasantry, makes this observation proceed from the mouth of a poor man, who had listened to a recital of the misfortunes of one who was brave, just, and virtuous.

“ The gardener pierces the vine even to bleeding, and suffers the bramble to grow its own way.”

But it is to the author of *Traits and Stories of the Irish Peasantry*, that we are chiefly indebted for our knowledge of what is peculiarly national and characteristic in his native language. He gives us a spirited and amusing chapter upon Irish swearing, by no means confined to those malevolent wishes which it would be a painful task to transcribe, but which, as they issue from the impassioned lips of the Irishman, have something of that sentimental nature (though far deeper in its character) triumphantly displayed by Acres before his friend. “ May the grass grow before your door,” conveys a striking picture of desolation and ruin. “ May you melt off the earth like the snow off the ditch,” is another figure of the same description.

If positive good had the power to neutralize evil, we might comfort ourselves in reading such expressions as these, with what the author goes

on to tell us, that the Irish have a superstitious dread of the curse of the pilgrim, mendicant, or idiot, and of the widow and the orphan. And so high is his idea of the duty he owes to these, that his heart is ever open to their complaint, and his hand ready to assist them. Thus it is not uncommon for them to say of a man whose affairs do not prosper, "He has had some poor body's curse;" and a woman who unexpectedly receives a guest, welcome in no way except that she was a stranger and a wanderer without a home, is described as exclaiming, "The blessing o' goodness upon you, dacent woman."

The frequent recurrence of the word *heart* in its unlimited capacity, gives a warmth and fervency to their expressions of tenderness or sorrow. "The beloved fair boy of my heart." "Father! son of my heart! thou art dead from me!" "Heavy and black was his heart." "The world's goodness is in your heart." "Light of my eyes, and of my heart;" but above all, "*Cushla machree*—the pulse of my heart," is most expressive of that deep-toned affection which the heart alone can understand.

What can exceed the following words for refined yet genuine and fervent sympathy, such

as those who have been intimately acquainted with suffering alone can feel ; and hence it is that the Irish derive their pathos, for what strain of human misery can be touched, to which their own experience has not an echo !

“Hunger and sickness and sorrow may come upon you when you’ll be far from your own, and from them that love you.” Or, “He’s far from his own the crather—the pretty young boy.”

“*Mavourneen dheelish*—my sweet darling,” is expressive of great tenderness.

“My father, the heavens be his bed!” when uttered with fervency, has both solemnity and pathos.

In their good wishes the Irish are most ingenious. “May every hair of your honour’s head become a mould candle to light you into glory.” “May you live a hundred years and a day longer,” which last words seem to be added from a sudden impulse, to throw another weight into the scale, or to heap another blessing into the measure already overflowing.

There is also a great deal of imagination in the manner in which they account for what they do not, or will not understand rationally ; always referring directly to the principles of good or evil. Thus a hard and unjust steward

who wore his ears stuffed with wool, was said to have adopted this custom that he might not hear the cries of the widow and the orphan.

In reply to instructions that were to prove his constancy, a peasant exclaims, "*Manim asthee hir*, my soul is within you." A mother thus regrets her son's approaching marriage, "You're going to break the ring about your father's hearth and mine." A broken-hearted mother exclaims, "My soul to glory, but my child's murdered!"

In a note by Crofton Croker, in his *Fairy Legends*, he remarks, "The Irish, like the Tuscans, as observed by Mr. Rose in his interesting *Letters from the North of Italy*, are extremely picturesque in their language. Thus they constantly use the word *dark* as synonymous with *blind*; and a blind beggar will implore you to 'Look down with pity on a poor dark man.'"

It may be observed here that the Irish, like the Scotch, by a very beautiful and tender euphemism, call *idiots*, *innocents*. A lady of rank in Ireland, the lady Bountiful of her neighbourhood, was one day asking a man about a poor orphan: "Ah! my lady," said he, "the poor creature is sadly afflicted with *inno-*

cence !” And another peculiarity in the phraseology of the Irish, is, their fondness for using what Mr. Burke would term “*sublime adjectives*,” instead of the common English adverbs—very, extremely, &c. Thus an Irishman will say, “Its a cruel cold morning ;” or, “There’s a power of ivy growing on the old church.”

There is a peculiarity of constitution both mental and bodily observable in the Irish people, for which it is difficult to account. One of their most amiable characteristics is the absence of satire, perhaps it would be more correct to say of *contemptuous satire* ; for the Irish are quick to see the ridiculous, but they can see without despising it. Unacquainted with that qualifying medium between what amuses them, and what excites their passions—that medium which an Englishman fills up with every variety and degree of contempt, they pass immediately from laughter to indignation ; and thus amongst the least civilized classes of the Irish, the social meeting too often terminates in the deadly fray. Madame de Stael in speaking of the Italians, makes the same observation with regard to the absence of contemptuous satire from their national cha-

racter; and it is to this amiable trait, in connection with great natural enthusiasm, that we may reasonably attribute the poetical constitution of both people. It is impossible to imagine that those combined ebullitions of music and verse, for which Italy has been celebrated, and which have unquestionably given a poetical tone to the character of her people;—that those bursts of impassioned feeling, finding at the same time a language and a voice, should ever have flourished under the auspices of John Bull; or that he should have sat by, and witnessed with delight those exhibitions of irrelevant tropes, and metaphors, and splendid perorations, and flashes of wit, and peals of passionate eloquence, for which Irish oratory has been distinguished. No; there is nothing more destructive to enthusiasm and poetry, indeed to genius in its most unlimited sense, than contempt. It is true, the calm judgment of the censor is often necessary to restrain the exuberance of undisciplined fancy, but he who *prides* himself upon being able to *put down* with a sneer, whatever is unnecessary in feeling, and extraneous in taste and imagination, ought to feel bound to supply, with something equally conducive to happiness, the void which this

practice must necessarily occasion in the highest range of intellectual gratification.

If other evidence were necessary, beyond what is afforded by the nature of the human mind, to prove that poetry may not only be mingled with, but highly enhance all that we enjoy and admire, we have this evidence in the Bible, abounding as it does in every variety of poetical language which it has entered into the mind of man to conceive. A slight examination of the different meanings attached to words of common and familiar signification, will sufficiently illustrate the high tone of imaginative interest flowing through the whole.

The words I have selected are, hand, wing, foot, head, mind, heart, and soul, of which hand is perhaps the most unlimited in its application.

HAND.

His *hand* will be against every man, and every man's *hand* against him.—And the children of Israel went out with an high *hand*.—The day of their calamity is at *hand*.—The Lord made all that he did to prosper in his *hand*.—The *hand* of the Lord is sore upon us.—For he put his life in his *hand*, and slew the Philistine.—As soon as the kingdom was confirmed in his *hand*.—I will set his *hand* also in the sea, and his right *hand* in the rivers.—In the shadow of his *hand* hath he hid me.—Would we had died by the *hand* of the Lord.—The *hand* of the Lord is gone

out against me.—The *hand* of the Lord was strong upon me.—If thou wilt take the left *hand*, then I will go to the right; or if thou depart to the right *hand*, then I will go to the left.—Let not thy left *hand* know what thy right *hand* doeth.—I will remember the years of the right *hand* of the Most High.—A wise man hears at his right *hand*.—Let my right *hand* forget her cunning.—Is there not a lie in my right hand.—If thy right hand offend thee, cut it off.—They gave to me and Barnabas the right *hand* of fellowship.

Here we find the word *hand* is not only used for the instrument of performing, maintaining, and possessing, but that it supplies the place of power, in all its different modifications of will, action, and suffering.

WING.

As one gathereth eggs that are left, have I gathered all the earth; and there was none that moved the *wing*.—Ye have seen what I have done unto the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles' *wings*, and brought you unto myself.—A full reward be given thee of the Lord God of Israel, under whose *wings* thou art come to trust. And he rode upon a cherub, and did fly: yea, he did fly upon the *wings* of the wind.—Oh that I had *wings* like a dove! for then would I fly away and be at rest.—Hide me under the shadow of thy *wings*.—If I take the *wings* of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea.—Riches make themselves *wings*.—Wo to the land shadowing with *wings*!—The wind hath bound her up in her *wings*.—The sun of righteousness shall arise with healing in his *wings*.

The word *wing* is here used not only as the instrument of conveying aloft, or away; but as

the means of sheltering and protecting; from the two different associations which we have with the flight of a bird, and the brooding of its young.

FOOT.

He will keep the *feet* of his saints, and the wicked shall be silent in darkness.—He maketh my *feet* like hinds' feet.—He that is ready to slip with his *feet*, is as a lamp despised in the thought of him that is at ease.—I was eyes to the blind, and *feet* was I to the lame.—He shall subdue the people under us, and the nations under our *feet*.—Suffer not our *feet* to be moved.—My *feet* were almost gone.—Lift up thy *feet* unto the perpetual desolations.—Her *feet* go down to death.—How beautiful upon the mountains are the *feet* of him that bringeth good tidings —Thou hast put all things in subjection under his *feet*.—No man lifted up his *foot* in all the land.—The flood breaketh out from the inhabitant; even the waters forgotten of the *foot*; they are dried up, they are gone away from men.

We see by these passages that *foot* is used in a very unlimited sense, as a foundation and a stay, as well as a means of establishing, confirming, moving, overcoming, and destroying.

HEAD.

Yet within three days shall Pharaoh lift up thine *head*, and shall restore thee unto thy place.—Thou hast kept me to be the *head* of the heathen.—Thy blood shall be upon thine own *head*.—Though his excellency mount up into the heavens, and his *head* reach the clouds.—Mine iniquities are gone over mine *head*.—Blessings are upon the *head* of

the just.—Thou shalt heap coals of fire upon his *head*.—
 Mine *head* is filled with dew.—Thou hast built thy high
 places at every *head* of the way.—Thy dream and the visions
 of thy *head* upon thy bed.—For this cause ought the woman
 to have power on her *head*, because of the angels.

We find *head* used here as it is in our ordinary language, not only as the chief portion of any whole, and the centre from whence our ideas flow; but as a figure it is most frequently made to stand for the highest part of man's nature—that which is most capable of being exalted or depressed—most calculated for receiving honour, as well as suffering degradation.

MIND.

And they put him in ward, that the *mind* of the Lord might be shewn them.—Bring it again to *mind*, O ye transgressors.—Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose *mind* is stayed on thee.—Sitting clothed, and in his right *mind*.—The carnal *mind* is enmity against God.—Let every man be fully persuaded in his own *mind*.—Even their *mind* and conscience is defiled.—Be all of one *mind*.—It was in my *mind* to build an house.—To do good or bad of mine own *mind*.—I know the frowardness of your *mind*.—Gird up the loins of your *mind*.—Comfort the feeble-minded.—A double minded man is unstable in all his ways.

Here we see that in the language of scripture, precisely the same license is used as in that of our poets. The word *mind* represents an ideal centre from whence volitions flow, and

relates almost exclusively to the understanding, the memory, and will.

HEART.

And God saw that every imagination of the thoughts of man's *heart* was only evil continually.—And Jacob's *heart* fainted, for he believed them not.—Pharaoh's *heart* was hardened.—Lay up these my words in your *heart*.—My brethren that went up with me made the *heart* of the people melt.—For the divisions of Reuben there were great searchings of *heart*.—And it was so, that when he had turned his back to go from Samuel, God gave him another *heart*.—David's *heart* smote him.—His *heart* died within him.—And God gave Solomon wisdom and understanding exceeding much, and largeness of *heart*, even as the sand that is on the sea shore.—His wives turned away his *heart*.—I caused the widow's *heart* to sing for joy.—A broken and contrite *heart*, O God, thou wilt not despise.—By sorrow of *heart* is the spirit broken.—I am pained at my very *heart*.—I weep for thee with bitterness of *heart*.—Out of the *heart* proceed evil thoughts.—Where your treasure is, there will your *heart* be also.—Did not our *heart* burn within us, while he talked by the way.—Love the Lord thy God with all thy *heart*.

The difference between *heart* and *mind* is here apparent. *Heart* comprehends the understanding and the affections, but has nothing to do with either memory or will, except as the affections may be considered as the moving cause of impressions upon the memory, and operations upon the will; while *mind* confined

to the sphere of the intellects has nothing to do with the affections.

SOUL.

And man became a living *soul*.—Set your *soul* to seek the Lord.—The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the *soul*.—He satisfieth the longing *soul*, and filleth the hungry *soul* with goodness.—Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the *soul*. but rather fear him which is able to destroy both *soul* and body in hell.—He hath poured out his *soul* unto death.—My *soul* is weary of my life.—Unto thee, O Lord, do I lift up my *soul*.—We were willing to have imparted unto you, not the gospel of God only, but also our own *souls*, because ye were dear unto us.—In patience possess ye your *souls*.—He that winneth *souls* is wise.—Thou fool, this night shall thy *soul* be required of thee.—Take heed to thyself, and keep thy *soul* diligently, lest thou forget the things which thine eyes have seen.—Why art thou cast down, O my *soul*, and why art thou disquieted within me?—As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my *soul* after thee, O God.—My *soul* shall be joyful in the Lord.—Save me, O God, for the waters are come in unto my *soul*.—Unless the Lord had been my help, my *soul* had almost dwelt in silence.—My *soul* fainteth for thy salvation.—My *soul* is even as a weaned child.—I shall go softly all my years in the bitterness of my *soul*.—The Lord is my portion. saith my *soul*.—My *soul* doth magnify the Lord.

We now find that every attribute both of the *mind* and the *heart* are comprehended in the meaning of the word *soul*. Not only is the soul capable of willing, acting, and suffering, but also of loving; and when we pursue the

idea of love through all its gradations, down to simple preference, we shall have traversed a region comprising every impulse by which our nature is capable of being influenced. But in addition to the most extensive signification of *mind* and *heart*, *soul* obtains a character more dignified and profound, from being associated with the principle of life—with man's moral responsibility—and with eternity.

In examining these few words we are struck with the idea, of how much they would lose in beauty and interest by being confined to their literal and absolute signification; and just in the same proportion would our intellectual attainments and pursuits be robbed of their ornament and charm, by being separated from the poetry of life.

